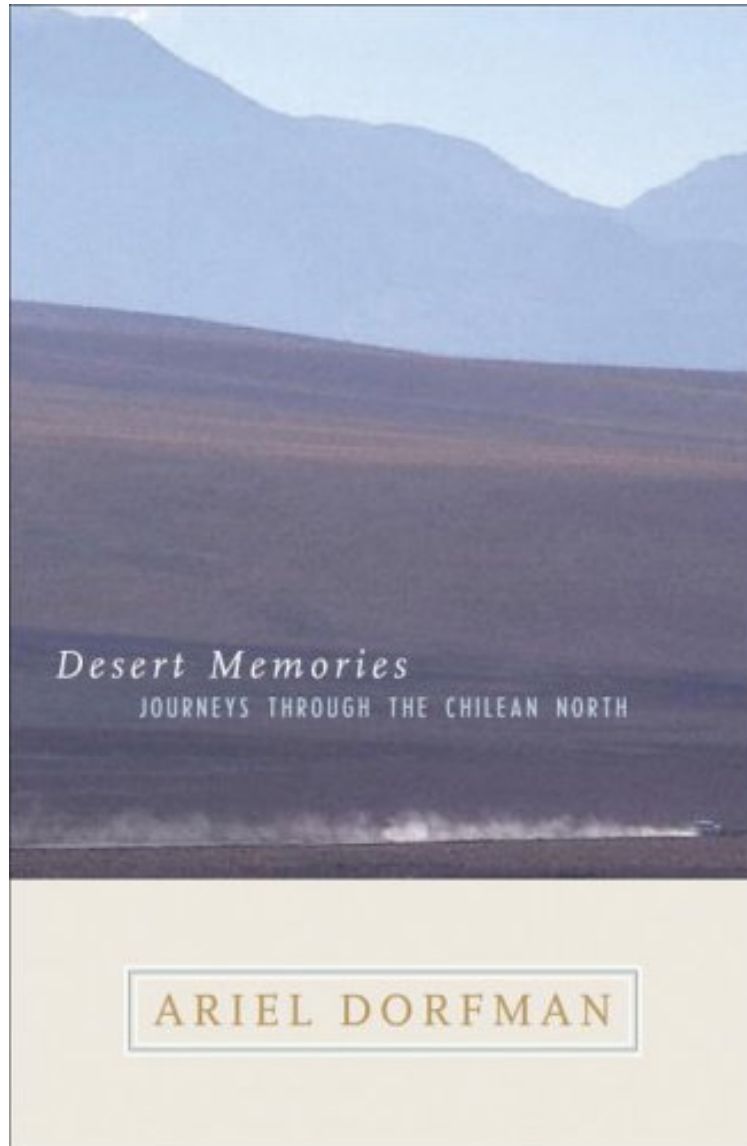


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Desert Memories: Journeys Through the Chilean North (Directions)

Ariel Dorfman

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Ariel Dorfman : Desert Memories: Journeys Through the Chilean North (Directions) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Desert Memories: Journeys Through the Chilean North (Directions):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Before you visit the Atacama Desert By Customer Dorfman's memoir is an excellent way to prepare for a visit to northern Chile and the Atacama Desert area in particular. He discusses both ancient and recent human history, presents his opinions of the good and bad effects of the modern resource extraction

industry and describes the landscape skillfully; his prose is quite moving in many places. I read it before visiting San Pedro de Atacama and exploring the surrounding area from there. The book made me mindful of the "tension" that still exists between the Atacameos and modern immigrants from other parts of Chile and neighboring countries whose borders artificially fractured the trade and travel routes of the older civilizations that flourished in that part of South America. Dorfman also stresses the importance of a visit to the anthropological museum in San Pedro de Atacama for a wealth of information about the layers of human history that enrich this most interesting and durable oasis. I recommend the book (and the museum) strongly for a better appreciation of the history of the Atacama Desert and the civilization that evolved there and is struggling to survive.² of 4 people found the following review helpful. A beautiful and important book

By Judy Blankenship Ariel Dorfman is one of the most important writers of our time, and *Desert Memories, Journeys Through the Chilean North* serves as a testament (and a coda) to the terrible years that began with the military overthrow of President Allende's democratically-elected government in 1973, the repression and horror that followed, the exile of so many who barely survived, such as Dorfman. His car trip through the Chilean North with his wife, Angelica, so many years later, is at once a reflection on those events as he visits concentration camps, clandestine graves, the family of a good friend who was "disappeared" by Pinochet's army, along with an evocation of the beauty of the desert landscape and its earlier, hidden history.¹⁶ of 16 people found the following review helpful. a lively, informative guide to an extraordinary place

By Elizabeth Rosa Horan I've lived in Chile and I've lived in the desert (but not Chile's Norte Grande). Ariel Dorfman writes very compellingly about the many complex aspects of desert life - the mining-based economy, the range of people who come from elsewhere, the relation of the desert as "periphery" to those "other places" who live off its wealth. Also he does justice to the desert's beauty, native peoples, transportation systems. He involves himself in the narrative, almost Woody-Allen style at times, but this book isn't in the British travel narrative mode of "here are all the awful things that happened to me." Rather, it's a story of extraordinary people and places - world-class scientists, grass-roots activists, byzantine networks of in-laws (few Chilean memoirs would be complete, lacking these!). It's a measure of this gifted writer's absolute skill that he has so many funny moments, and fine descriptions of the desert's landscape, and the pathos of people working to reclaim the ghost towns of the mining industry, all in one book. One of the book's most moving moments, for me, is the chapter that ends with the narrator observing of one town citizen who'd returned to a reclaimed ghost town, that there was no need to ask if he'd kept the key to the house he'd been forced to leave thirty years earlier. The title is absolutely right: memory and time are crucial to the desert. In writing of Chile, one of the most complicated and interesting country of the world, Dorfman brings with him his experience, contacts, broad awareness of this land. The narrative is beautifully structured, too. Dorfman, in all, is getting better and better with time. There are many wonderful books about Chile's extraordinary history, its many-layered social class structure, its heart-breakingly beautiful geography. The field of social and ecological memoirs/travelogues about Chile is a very crowded one, with some top-notch writers (think Darwin, just for starters...). *Desert Memories* is one of the best books there is for anyone considering a trip to this country.

The Norte Grande of Chile, the world's driest desert, had "engendered contemporary Chile, everything that was good about it, everything that was dreadful," writes Ariel Dorfman in his brilliant exploration of one of the least known and most exotic corners of the globe. For 10,000 years the desert had been mined for silver, iron, and copper, but it was the 19th-century discovery of nitrate that transformed the country into a modern state and forced the desert's colonization. The mines' riches generated mansions and oligarchs in Chile's more temperate region and terrible inequalities throughout the country. The Norte Grande also gave birth to the first Chilean democratic and socialist movements, nurturing every major political figure of modern Chile from Salvador Allende to Augusto Pinochet. In this richly layered personal memoir, illustrated with the author's own photographs, Dorfman sets out to explore the origins of contemporary Chile and, along the way, seek out his wife's European ancestors who came years ago to Chile as part of the nitrate rush. And, most poignantly, he looks for traces of his friend and fellow 1960s activist, Freddy Taberna, executed by a firing squad in a remote Pinochet death camp.

From Publishers Weekly Prolific Chilean writer Dorfman and his wife, Anglica, travel north from Santiago, Chile, through the world's driest desert, the Atacama, an area where two millimeters of rain can cause a deadly mudslide. In recounting his journey "to the origins," Dorfman brings elements from his broad range as a writer. Dorfman the journalist weaves encyclopedic information into his text (e.g., facts on Monte Verde, possibly "the oldest settlement ever discovered in the Americas"), while Dorfman the poet gives color to the desert ("a dizzying array of browns and grays and terra-cottas") and vitality to places like Pampa Union, once "a town of brothels and bars, opium dens and gambling joints, a town only visited now by the whirlwinds and the shifting sands." As Anglica searches for truths about her family history, Dorfman the novelist unravels the labyrinthine tale along with her. The playwright, a keen listener, lets diverse others tell much of the tale, including a "gathering of elderly pampinos," novelist Hernn Rivera Letelier and archeologist Lautaro Nez. Throughout the three-week trip, Dorfman the human rights activist foregrounds the figure of the desaparecido as he searches for "the disappeared body" of his friend Freddy Taberna. Archeology and

astronomy, history and legend, intimate detail and public policy, relics from 50,000 years ago and mass graves from three decades ago are joined in this compelling trek. Readers whose baggage includes, as Dorfman's did at the beginning, "a deep-seated prejudice against deserts in general" will change their tune as they travel through this book, which entertains, informs and deeply engages. Map, 23 bw photos. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

About the Author Ariel Dorfman, the Chilean novelist, playwright, journalist, poet, and human rights activist was forced into exile from his homeland following the Chilean military coup of 1973. Since the restoration of democracy in 1990, he has divided his time between Santiago and the United States. Among his many works are the memoir *Heading South*, *Looking North* and the highly acclaimed play *Death and the Maiden*. His writings have won numerous awards, including the Sir Laurence Olivier Award for best play in London, 1992. He contributes regularly to major newspapers and magazines around the world. He is a distinguished professor at Duke University and lives with his wife Anglica, in Durham, North Carolina, and Santiago, Chile.