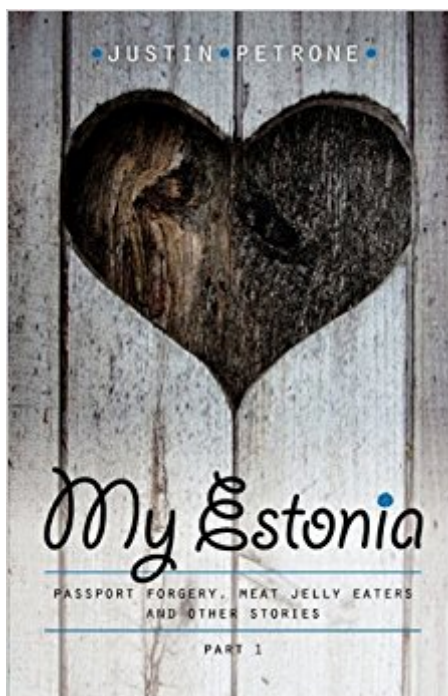


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# My Estonia: Passport Forgery, Meat Jelly Eaters, And Other Stories



## Synopsis

Some people have said this book is romantic and maybe it is: a young lost American college grad falls in love with an intriguing European journalist and embarks on a journey that restores his faith in himself and the world. Sure, it is romantic. But it was never easy. A foreigner arrives in the middle of a dark winter and must survive in Estonia, the "least fortunate Scandinavian country," a land where people eat blood sausage and jellied meat, drink warm bread, and are always on time; a place where every family is haunted by the past and is struggling to catch up to the present. Over the course of one year, so much happens in this tiny northern land that it stops being foreign. Estonia and the college grad turned journalist become intimately acquainted. Inseparable. And in the end, he comes to love it, even when they do not want to let him back into their country.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I quite enjoyed this book and ordered the sequel as well. It was very interesting to read foreigners perspective about Estonia and Estonians. Author describes his journey with honesty and humor making the book a delightful read. I am looking forward to reading the sequel and other books from "my" series.

very well written with a lot of humor

It was an OK book that offered an outsider, but not really an original, view of Estonia and Estonians. For an Estonian-American like me it has a nostalgic value of the familiar left behind. However, the

writing style (short, choppy sentences) and author's tone (that of a wise westerner observing those funny Estonians) annoyed me at times.

This book is so much fun to read - I went through almost 300 pages in two days, couldn't put it down before it was all done. I could relate to a lot in this book because I, too, am from Estonia and have a husband that was born in the States and so many things in this book seemed sooooo familiar. He is RIGHT ON and does a great job in putting the very essence of Estonia on the paper. However, the only critique I have is that the political commentary was sort of "deus ex machina" in the sense that it didn't blend well with the rest of the book and wasn't interesting - I'm a Democrat myself but I'm more than over-saturated with writers bashing Bush and the war in Iraq and how anti-Semitic everybody is. The comment about how Estonians were as cruel to Jews as German Nazis was offensive - it is simply untrue. There were literally less than 20 Estonians that were hired by SS and were cruel to Jews, and this is not enough to make these vast negative generalizations. For an average Estonian, anti-Semitism is about as relevant as sÃfÂ It is to an average American. Still, since the political commentary was not too long, the book receives 5 stars from me.

Good stuff

I bought this for my wife and she loved it. Our son's girl friend is Estonian and my wife thought the book would give her insight into the Estonian mindset.

As an Estonian-American, I occasionally read and very much enjoy Justin Petrone's blog "Itching for Eestimaa". (I also loved "Minu Ameerika" written by Justin's Estonian wife, Epp.) So I had pretty high hopes for this new book, and once again, Justin didn't disappoint. This is one of those delicious books that can really appeal to many different tastes, regardless of whether you have some sort of personal connection with Estonia or can't even locate it on the map: it's a quick read, hilarious, witty and insightful. Justin's style is wonderfully expressive - it made me feel like I was right there and knew the people he's talking about, I could almost smell the smells and taste the foods he describes. And best of all - it made me laugh out loud and really care about its subjects. (One complaint though: I would have loved to make the reading enjoyment last for several days but found myself simply unable to put the book down and hence missed out on some crucial beauty sleep :-P Sequel, please!!!

Estonia isn't quite small enough that everybody knows everybody, even if it does sometimes seem like it. But it is a small enough country that you can meet anybody you want. Even the president's mobile phone number isn't a secret, and while it doesn't happen to be stored in the memory of my cell phone, it probably wouldn't take more than a few minutes for many citizens to obtain. Welcome to Estonia, where almost everyone who gets out of bed in the morning is famous for something, yet is still completely accessible. Including Justin Petrone. I first heard of Justin through his wife, Epp, who is a "famous" Estonian journalist, which is to say her byline is familiar to Estonians who read. Epp had attracted my attention for her blogs about the United States, which chronicled her crusade to convert Justin's American parents into vegetarians who save Christmas wrapping paper for use again in future holidays. She didn't have much luck, though it made for interesting reading. So when Justin and Epp moved to Estonia several years ago, I made it a point to meet Justin. We met over a beer and compared war stories. I too had married an Estonian. I too had lived with her in the United States where she struggled to understand a culture too often represented by twelve CDs for a penny. I too had returned to Estonia with my wife where I was routinely perplexed by "the world's only post-Communist Nordic country," as Justin refers to it on his blog. There aren't many people writing about Estonia, and there are fewer still writing honestly about Estonia. The tourist brochures are generally nothing more than a long string of suspicious superlatives. Only the photos may be believed. The real Estonian character is dry humor coupled with almost disturbing sincerity, as illustrated by an Estonian aphorism which characterizes the nation as "f\*\*ked up in the Russian way but with German precision." That characterization isn't so true anymore, but it's certainly worth reading about. And that's a void in the literature of this nation which Justin's book fills. I confess I don't always believe Justin. He sometimes casts himself as a seeker finding crumbs of wisdom and life lessons in the darkest, smelliest corridors of this small nation, as well as in forests so sunny and pristine that hobbits might dwell there. I don't know him well enough that I can say what The Real Justin Petrone is like, but then again knowing The Real Justin Petrone isn't the issue. I read for the ride. I read for a whiff of post-Soviet stairwells and the bleach-drenched floors of Estonia's sleek, modern e-state, not to mention the meadows filled with perfect wildflowers. Justin Petrone gives us them all.

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