

## How I Lost My Kidneys in China: A Twenty-Five-Year Overindulgent Odyssey

**Randall Flores**

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*According to the cheerful expatriate's memoir How I Lost My Kidneys in China, nothing is worse than going through life without adventure.*

Randall Flores's rollicking memoir *How I Lost My Kidneys in China* chronicles twenty-five years of boozing and business in Asia prior to major health struggles.

Flores developed an interest in Chinese in college and later pursued a manufacturing career in China, where he built a life and family. He also drank in copious quantities at after-work functions, smoked, savored spicy food, sampled local cuisines, and traveled. He witnessed historical events, including SARS and the 2008 Beijing Olympics. His revelry was cut short, though, by an unexplained health condition that caused his organs to shut down. He adjusted to this new life, undergoing dialysis and making major lifestyle changes.

Such extraordinary recollections are shared without regard to issuing lessons or seeking bigger meaning; rather, they are forwarded in an entertaining, matter-of-fact, and sometimes flippant manner. There are descriptions of "throwing back swimming pools full of alcohol" and looking to be rid "of the yellow stomach acids" after a three-day bender "through a valley of hard drinking miners." The culture and cuisine of China is extolled, as with happy memories of chili pepper sandwiches. And there are twenty-eight points of advice for fellow travelers (avoid restaurants near train stations; check cash for forgeries; negotiate the price). Gallows humor factors in, too, as where Flores lists "do not die in China" as one of his rules and quips about "making friends again!" following a shouting match with a roommate.

Though the book promises that Flores has enough tales "to fill a few volumes," there are memory holes represented. Still, the prose is animated and lively. It includes memorable descriptions, as of being "so dehydrated that I craved the sugary water like a crack fiend" and of factory workers who "had big, meaty fingers like sausages" and "road maps of wrinkles on their faces and hands." Those who Flores interacted with are made memorable, too, even when language barriers limited them to rudimentary interactions, as with "a bubbly, thirty-something woman with a poodle perm named Sugar." And while the book ends on a wistful note, Flores is also convincing when he declares that he would not change a thing about his time in China.

Nothing is worse than going through life without adventures, according to the unapologetic memoir *How I Lost My Kidneys in China*, which relays travels abroad with flair and humor.

JOSEPH S. PETE (June 21, 2024)

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