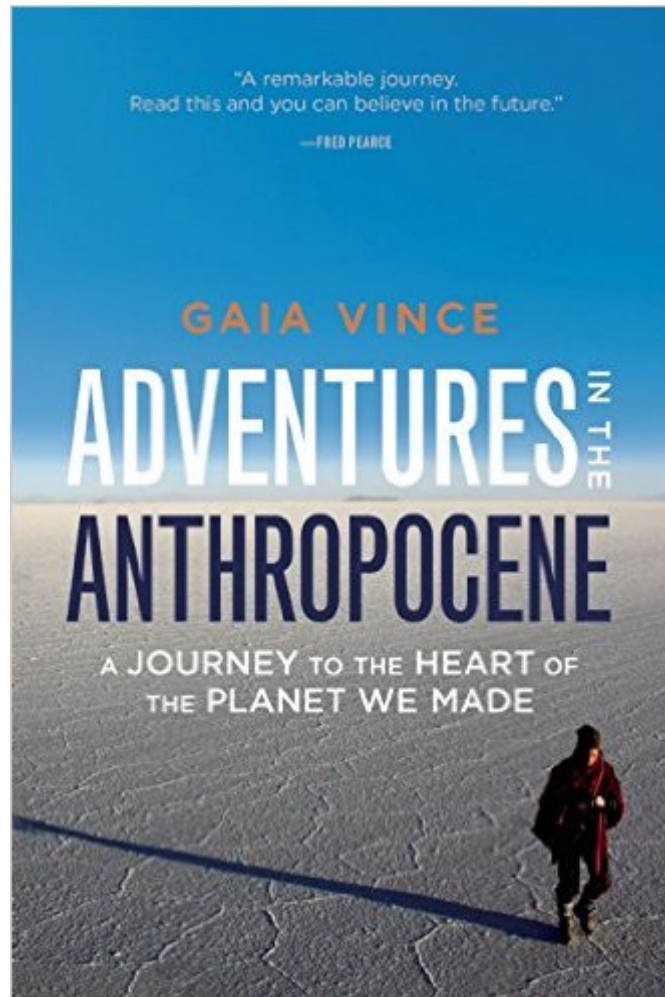


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Adventures In The Anthropocene: A Journey To The Heart Of The Planet We Made



Synopsis

We live in times of great change on Earth. In fact, while previous shifts from one geological epoch to another were caused by events beyond human control, the dramatic results of our emission of carbon to the atmosphere over the past century have moved many scientists to declare the dawn of a new era: the Anthropocene, or Age of Man. Watching this consensus develop from her seat as an editor at Nature, Gaia Vince couldn't help but wonder if the greatest cause of this dramatic planetary change—humans—singular ability to adapt and innovate—might also hold the key to our survival. And so she left her professional life in London and set out to travel the world in search of ordinary people making extraordinary changes and, in many cases, thriving. Part science journal, part travelogue, *Adventures in the Anthropocene* recounts Vince's journey, and introduces an essential new perspective on the future of life on Earth.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Sometimes seeing the word "Anthropocene" in a title can be daunting. It resonates with a lot of facts but also considerable emotion. This reviewer is pretty tired of emotion and moral imperatives when it comes to reading a book. The extraordinarily adventurous Vince did not do that. She looked at a lot of issues that are laden with holier than thou platitudes and provided several sides of the issues in order to present a very readable book on how we humans have changed the earth and what that might all mean. As the title informs this is the planet we made. Any slightly knowledgeable and non-delusional person of average intelligence knows that. Certainly there are gainsayers but

they are in a minority who either have their heads in the sand or have something to gain by their iconoclasm-like politicians for instance. Leaving that discussion aside, Vince was clear that we humans have changed the world dramatically and perhaps forever. Yet it is not a screed wrought with hopelessness. She presents a lot of good ideas along with her tales of interesting people she met in her worldwide travels done to complete this book. Using ten chapters to describe aspects of earth and how they are changing, she met people who are doing things to improve the earth no matter how small their efforts. One of those chapters is about farmlands and she investigated ways to improve the harvests and feed more people. One litmus test of her even keeled presentation has to do with GMOs-genetically modified organisms. Despite the often shrill damnation of GMOs we do know that it has been going on since the dawn of agriculture.

This is a challenging and sometimes tiresome book. I rate it a 5 because of the exhaustive travel (2 years visiting very many places to better understand how they fit in the coming Anthropocene) and the clarity with which she writes. This is not an unqualified recommendation. Her argument is a bit diffuse, and she seems in this book to waver between optimism we can deal with environmental crisis and pessimism at the gravity of the situation. The key I think--spoiler alert!--is the Epilog. This has her son Kipp rereading this book in 2100, when he's 87, reflecting on the events of the 21st century. Those "remembered" events include wars, the extinction of animals such as elephants and tigers, and the extinction of island nations such as the Maldives and cities such as New Orleans. We'll work it out but there will be significant costs. The chapters are written more or less to a formula. Vince describes the general environmental problems of the chapter focus (such as deserts), provides some context of history, politics and economics, and then describes localities and some of the people there, often remarkable people who have come up with creative ways to successfully cope with environmental changes. The ability of people to come up with creative and effective changes seems to be an article of faith for her; I'm not so optimistic, but there are a number of quite remarkable people in this book and their stories really do reinforce the idea of human ingenuity and its ability to solve emerging problems, often in the sense of individuals trying new solutions where governments are not interested. Vince describes several governments, such as in Bolivia, Chile, and Uganda.

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