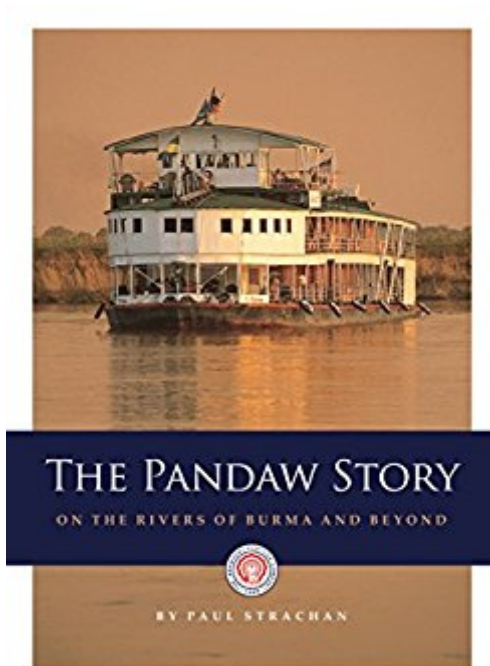


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The Pandaw Story: On The Rivers Of Burma And Beyond



Synopsis

In 1995 Paul Strachan invited an unlikely assortment of eccentrics and adventurers to join him in an untried new boat that would venture up the Irrawaddy River, the first time foreign tourists had ventured up the mighty Burmese thoroughfare since the Second World War. Against all odds, the trip was a huge success, word quickly spread and before Strachan knew it he was running a business in one of the world's least business-friendly environments. He named it the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company in honour of the Glasgow-based company that ran Burma's river transport when the country was an outpost of the British Raj. The company now trades under the name Pandaw, after the Clyde-built paddle steamer it restored in Burma. In turns hilarious, shocking, moving and often highly provocative, this book celebrates the 20th anniversary of the revived Irrawaddy Flotilla Company and the 150th anniversary of the founding of the original Irrawaddy Flotilla. In *The Pandaw Story* Strachan describes many adventures, successes and mishaps on the rivers of Burma and then, after 2002 on the Kwai, Mekong, Ganges and Rajang rivers all of which he pioneered for river cruising. Few foreigners lived in Burma through these years and this book gives a number of fascinating insights into life in a military dictatorship, offering a uniquely well-informed account of the brutal impasse that for decades has dominated political life in one of the world's least-understood countries. This lively, humorous and anecdotal account gives some insights into the trials and tribulations of doing business in Burma and in South-East Asia more generally, introducing many outrageous and some sinister characters.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Paul Strachan's book is a very readable history of the development of Pandaw cruises after the end of WW 2 initially in Myanmar and then to other countries in the region. It covers a wide field, the technical aspects of building and operating river boats designed for relatively shallow water operations, and the problems of recruiting and managing crews and managers of varying cultural groups. The difficulties of working with the local and national legislative bodies both in terms of their propensity to regard their appointments as a licence to get as much income as possible by fair means or foul and their lack of managerial skills makes the reader wonder at Paul Strachan's ability to cope with one hurdle after another. This book will have great appeal to those who have travelled on one of the Pandaw cruises (as we have) and will be an excellent introduction for those thinking of doing so.

I thought that this was a very interesting, and at times humorous book. It is part memoir, part history and part guide to doing business in south Asia. I was particularly interested by the author's observation regarding the tactics of Nobel peace prize winner Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. "A few words of hers and an entire generation would go without basic health and education support." The author offers a contrarian perspective on western boycotts, and offers a first hand account of the impact that these decisions had on the lives of the ordinary Burmese citizen. Mr. Strachan's story fills a unique niche; the majority of books on Myanmar are either travel guides or weighty political discourses. Contrastingly, this book tells the story of everyday people trying to run a business under incredibly difficult circumstances. It gave me a better understanding on what it is like to live in Burma and do business in South Asia.

Paul Strachan's book provides a fascinating insight into his perspective of working in Burma. The history of the Pandaws is colourful and makes for a great story overall. Some chapters are page turners as they describe the trials and tribulations of setting up a business and getting the ships

afloat. But there are other chapters where the story is a touch repetitive and I lost interest. Overall a great read if you're interested in Burma or shipping, or travel in general.

We did a 10 day trip on the Katha Pandaw, our best vacation ever, of over 20 cruises. To now be able to read about what this man went through to get this company started is unbelievable. We have booked another cruise in 2016, the maiden voyage through Laos, Burma, Thailand, and up into rural China on the Upper Mekong. A great story about a great man and a great company. I will say that there are hundreds of little grammatical and punctuation errors that should be edited, but it's still a wonderful book.

Of particular interest to anyone who wishes to understand the business climate in Burma over the past two decades of military rule and anyone who might have traveled on one or more of the Pandaw journeys. Engagingly written but suffers from poor editing...numerous mis-spellings and difficult-to-understand grammatical constructions. A bit too rough around the edges to elicit 5 stars but entertaining and informative nonetheless.

Loved this book. We're going on a Pandaw cruise in November and can't wait. I really enjoy Mr. Strachan's writing and it's quite a story! Not sure why there were so many typos in the Kindle edition, but I was able to overlook them because the story is so riveting.

Harrowing adventures on unknown rivers while building a thriving river cruise business. Can't wait to sail the Mekong with Pandaw.

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