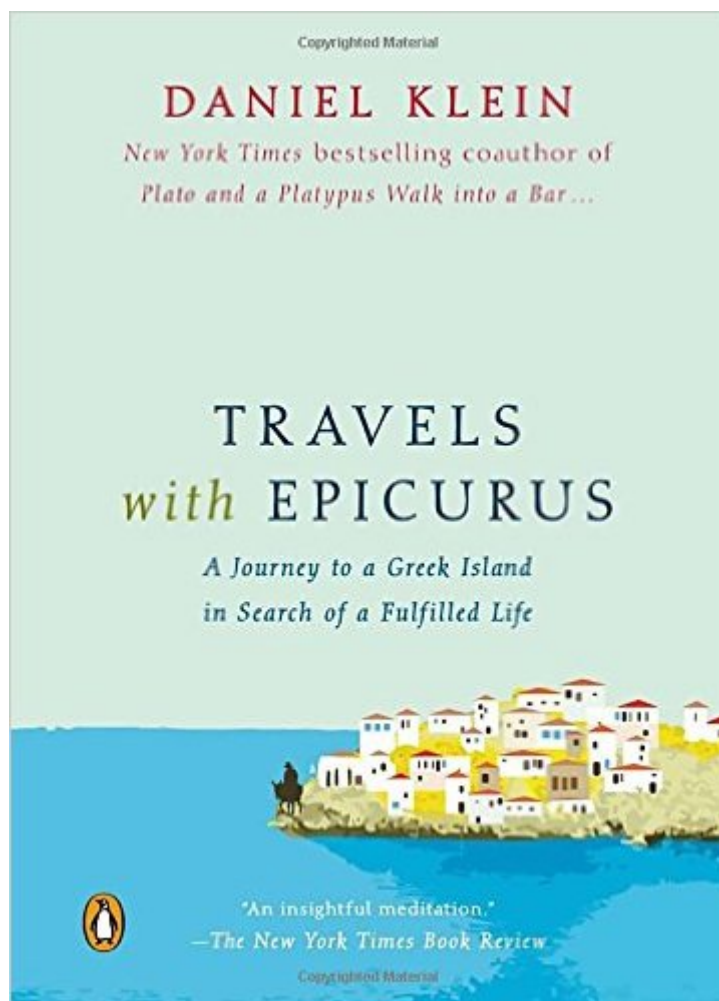


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# Travels With Epicurus: A Journey To A Greek Island In Search Of A Fulfilled Life



## Synopsis

Advice on achieving a fulfilling old age from one of the bestselling authors of Plato and a Platypus Walk into a Bar . . . After being advised by his dentist to get tooth implants, Daniel Klein decides to stick with his dentures and instead use the money to make a trip to the Greek island Hydra and discover the secrets of aging happily. Drawing on the inspiring lives of his Greek friends and philosophers ranging from Epicurus to Sartre, Klein uncovers the simple pleasures that are available late in life, as well as the refined pleasures that only a mature mind can fully appreciate. A travel book, a witty and accessible meditation, and an optimistic guide to living well, *Travels with Epicurus* is a delightful jaunt to the Aegean and through the terrain of old age that only a free spirit like Klein could lead.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Daniel Klein is a modest writer; he feels obliged to consult and pay tribute to the philosophers, ancient and modern, who have had wise things to say about the meaning of life, especially the question of how to deal with growing old. But the real charm of this book lies in following Klein as he wanders around his idyllic Greek island, observing how the contented locals there deal with aging, and arriving at his own wry but upbeat answers to the age-old questions. Not only is the glass half full, but it is filled with something simple, heartwarming and tasty. Epicurus would be proud.

So, my husband of forty years and I read to each other each morning before breakfast, often poetry. We began to travel with this poet of sorts last week. He makes us think about stuff worth thinking

about while simultaneously enchanting us with his language, insight, brevity and clarity. A total treat, and therapeutic to boot!

Without telling you WHAT to think, Dan Klein suggests HOW we can think about growing older in any number of interesting ways. Reading this book is like conversing with a friend who knows some of the best quotes from philosophers - from ancient Greece to today- to help focus the conversation. We join the author on his Greek Island- vividly depicted- as he clarifies thoughts that have crossed the mind of anyone over 65 who lives thoughtfully, and adds some new ones. This book was very satisfying to read and savor, a few chapters at a time. It is emphatically NOT about how to stay forever young. It does point the way to finding more delight and meaning as we move toward the end of our lives.

To my mind the compelling aspect of this short book is its depiction of how the more relaxed Greek lifestyle, particularly in the rural areas, seems to naturally prepare one for a simple, leisurely, sociable and enjoyable old age, a life in many ways similar to what the philosopher Epicurus recommended. Klein's Greek friend Tasso, a retired judge, seems to exemplify this lifestyle. For Klein, unlike Tasso, apparently neither his culture nor his personal interest in philosophy have prepared him to assume the role of an old man naturally and comfortably; therefore, he has to think about it. Although he talks quite a bit about Epicurus' "laid-back" philosophy, his interest in Existentialism seems to run deeper. According to Klein, Existentialism seems to emphasize constantly making conscious choices about how to live, which sounds nerve-wracking, to my mind. But Klein never seems to come to a firm conclusion or direction in his explorations. When he returns home, he finds his wife has been writing a magazine piece about seniors who have returned to work, many of whom seem to enjoy it. Klein then starts wondering if a compromise between work and leisure might be possible in old age. Other musings on old age are equally inconclusive. He bemoans the "forever young" health-nut ethos common in the U.S., but seems kind of guilty about some of his unhealthy habits such as smoking. Another example is his intensified interest in religion in old age. The question of the meaning or point of it all has become much more urgent. Klein looks at Hinduism and Buddhist mindfulness very briefly, but again cannot come to a conclusion. In the epilogue, I think he confuses Buddhist mindfulness with thinking about options and choices. Buddhist mindfulness is kind of a misnomer and might better be termed direct awareness. One is aware of one's environment simply and directly rather than as a collection of objects the ego is conscious of, and one responds to one's situation spontaneously. In this sense, old age is not a

problem, because there is no self-conscious ego that experiences or suffers something called old age. Highly recommended as a travel book, but less so as a philosophical consideration of old age.

Don't wait until you're old to read this book - unless you already are. Journey to Hydra with Epicurus and Daniel Klein for a taste of life's simple pleasures and discover secrets to enjoying the rest of your life in the bargain. You will relish the adventure so much you'll want to turn back to the beginning of the book and take the voyage again, as I did. Bon voyage.

In a nutshell, Daniel Klein tells us Greek philosopher Epicurus believes "the happiest life is free from self-imposed demands of commerce and politics." Appreciate the here and now, celebrate beauty, strive for nothing, enjoy simple pleasures, have companions, bathe yourself in happiness--guilt free. If you're inspired by business success books, motivational seminars, expert advice on professional and personal empowerment, Klein's Travels with Epicurus (Penguin Book; 2013) will leave you scratching your head. Heck, if you harbor any admiration for the so-called Protestant work ethic, the book could assault your sense of a proper worldview. Where is the productivity, responsibility, obligation, service and contribution to society, community, your fellow man? However, I hear Klein's voice differently. If his notion of good living irritates you to that extreme, you may be wound a little too tightly. Fulfillment requires balance (a point made in the book), and I'm convinced our "travel guide's" observations prove you can't really sustain the Epicurean model for an entire life. In fact, the man couldn't even be on this Greek Isle, relaxing and waxing philosophic had he not worked and "earned" the spot, at least to some degree. In essence, the irony is, Travels is for people who have earned it (though I'm pretty certain Klein would say everybody deserves it). I think it's probably about the most beautifully written story for the retired soul who sees little value in working yourself to death until the day you die. (NOTE: I rarely give 5 stars - this book could be the most perfectly written book I'll experience this year.)-- Tom Field

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