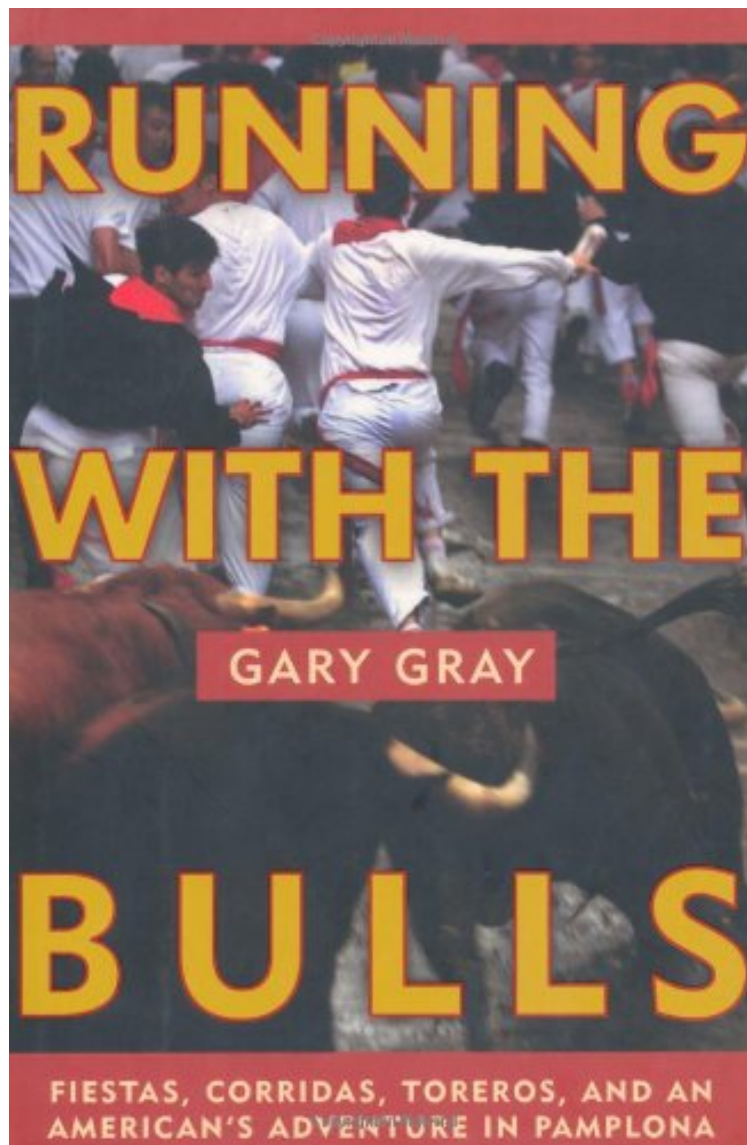


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Running with the Bulls: Fiestas, Corridas, Toreros, and An American's Adventure in Pamplona

Gary Gray

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Gary Gray : Running with the Bulls: Fiestas, Corridas, Toreros, and An American's Adventure in Pamplona before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Running with the Bulls: Fiestas, Corridas, Toreros, and An American's Adventure in Pamplona:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great Detailed ReadBy Tampalf you have ever entertained the idea of actually Running with the Bulls this book give specific details of the best routes, strategies, etc. Also, if you're never going to run yourself but want the true flavor of what it's like this is your read.8 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Ole, GrayBy Virginia A. SmithAs a paradoxically resisting and admiring reader and teacher of Hemingway for many years, I opened Gary Gray's "Running with the Bulls" on a recent summer evening with a similar sense of ambivalence. Described to me earlier as "Under the Tuscan Sun on adrenaline," my post-read corrective of "Running with the Bulls" would be: "More like 'Under the Tuscan Sun' on testosterone"--and with far more passion, character, and heart than Francis Mayes' aesthetically gorgeous but rather icy treatise on Tuscany. From the start, Gray displays a charming lack of self-consciousness about the ways in which his perennial quest for running with the Pamplona bulls in the July festival of San Fermin positions him as a Hemingway wannabe'. The author nods often and authentically to how Don Ernesto's "The Sun Also Rises," "Death in the Afternoon," and "The Dangerous Summer," motivated his own, original 1980 visit to Pamplona--and continues to inform his annual treks. Even so, the Hemingway intertextuality of "Running with the Bulls," never annoys. As Gray narrates twenty-two years of his own American adventures in Spain, the reader is rewarded with a retrospective animated by Gray's considerably unique sensibility. As these 17 or 18 separate pilgrimages to Pamplona from 1980-2001 weave together to form a single narrative tapestry about Spain, bullfighting, Pamplonese food and bar and folk culture, what impressed me was the distinctiveness Gray gives each vignette, often separated by many years. From the 1980 side trip to Tangiers with his then fiancée, Katie O'Toole, to the 2001 San Fermin's "next generation" running with the bulls with Gray's two oldest daughters, the reader is rewarded with lucidly recollected and deliciously described sensuous detail. From the poppy fields and olive groves in the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the numerous three-hour Spanish dinner with cocktails, wine, lamb, bull stew, scallops, flan and coffee (no paella?), Gray treats each meal, each bullfight, each side-trip and conversation with old American and new Pamplonan friends, with rich reverence, delivering them to the reader not as narrative description but as the stuff of life. Okay--so if this book has a flaw--and even the greatest of works does--it is the relentlessness of these details. By the second half of the book, without a larger personal tension or evolving historical, political, or social commentary to sustain them, the catalogues of bullfighting minutia, drinking escapades, and restaurant fare begin to function in the reader's imagination more as accounting ledgers than the rich layers of story-telling. But given how much the author is drinking and how little he is sleeping on this collage of separate trips, his ability to recall how a particular torero worked the bull in 1987, or the specific quality of a salty ham appetizer and rioja reserva wine in 1991, astounds and impresses. That said, the second half of the book often repeats rather than develops the themes of the travelogue's first part--at that point, I resisted the impulse to skim. But his book is so much more than an American hedonist's journal of Pamplonan bullfighting and festivals. I deeply admired the spiritual structure of the work. If Hemingway's and Gray's bullfighting rings are existential metaphors for the passion of life and the terrible but noble inevitability of death, Gray shows himself by book's end as adept if secular a metaphysician as he is a partyer. Punctuating twenty-some years of narrative revelry in this text is a well-narrated political assassination, the birth of Gray's six children and the deaths of many more bulls. The work ends with a bittersweet memento mori as Gray meditates on the death of an elderly restaurateur and a young and dashing torero--both of whom had lived with what Gray values supremely, lives, and gives as a significant gift to his reader in each page of "Running with the Bulls"--aficion.6 of 9 people found the following review helpful. A Personal Memoir of PamplonaBy Ray MoutonThe really interesting thing about reading Gary Gray's very personal memoir of his travels to Spain and his times in Pamplona's Fiesta is this: The experiences he shares which may seem so unique to the reader are experiences available to anyone who makes the journey to Pamplona each July, and Gray makes this point for the reader. He let's the reader know that in this very foreign culture with it's own age-old customs, traditions, rites and rituals an American can not only be easily accepted - -he or she can be embraced, indeed adopted by local Navarrans as Gray was by people who have become part of his family. When this book was published, it had been over thirty years since an American had published a book on Pamplona, and if there was one central point to make above all others, it is the point made that is referenced in the preceding paragraph, i.e. this fiesta which seems so foreign from afar can seem very familiar up close. This is a personal story, an up close look through the eyes of one person and what the reader is able to see is well worth seeing.

In "Running with the Bulls," Gary Gray grabs hold of us and takes us on a grand and intimate tour of one of Spain's most passionate and historic cities. In 1926, Ernest Hemingway brought the frenetic charge of Pamplona's Festival of San Fermin to life in *The Sun Also Rises*. Today, that same energy still exists for the thousands who descend upon the city each July. At the center of the celebration is the famous encierro -- the running of the bulls. Gray, a professor of finance at Penn State, has participated in the encierro every year for over two decades. He has befriended dozens of Pamplonicas, many of whom are closely tied to the inner circle of the Festival. From this unique perspective, he leads us on several crazed sprints through the Plaza de Toros as half-a-dozen bulls, each bred to kill, rush from behind with hot breath and razor-sharp horns. He explains the history and pageantry behind the corrida (the Spanish bullfight); takes us to witness the religious pilgrims on their somber march, and pulls us into a pulsing Spanish street dance. We

taste the richness of each meal and fullness of each glass of wine, as the wonders of Pamplona are revealed through his eyes. At once a rousing adventure of an American man seduced and a beautifully rendered portrait of Spain and her culture, "Running with the Bulls" is sure to be a classic of travel literature for years to come.

.com Some days you skewer the bull, and some days the bull skewers you: this is one of the many useful lessons to be learned from Gary Gray's memoir of seasons spent in Pamplona, Spain, where life revolves around the rituals and realities of tauromachy. Stockbroker and finance professor Gray caught the bullfighting bug twenty-odd years ago while vacationing in Spain, and swiftly advanced from rank turista to learned aficionado by, among other things, participating in (and surviving) Pamplona's famed "running of the bulls." For those interested in doing the same, he offers notes on how best to ensure emerging ungoered and unscathed (walk the narrow course beforehand, he counsels, and "plan an escape route should you become a bull's bull's-eye"). Elsewhere he revels in other aspects of Spanish life, recounting travels throughout the country, impossibly rich meals, complicated political discussions, and all-night drinking sessions in the company of men and women who share his passion for the corrida. Though no threat to Ernest Hemingway's classic *Death in the Afternoon*, Gray's book capably describes a most dangerous pastime--and some wonderful Spanish places. --Gregory McNamee
From Booklist
Written by a professor who has been visiting Pamplona for a couple of decades, this account won't change the mind of anyone who thinks running with the bulls is the epitome of craziness. Avoiding the poetic, Hemingway-influenced approach to bullfighting, Gray takes a more realistic tack. He describes Pamplona with the verve of a good travel writer, making us feel as though we are there ourselves, befriending the people, but he doesn't romanticize the bull run; in fact, he makes it clear that the experience of running with the bulls is more scary than poetic, as the many injured and mutilated participants can testify. Missing from the book, unfortunately, is any real examination of the vital question: Why, for crying out loud, would anyone want to deliberately step in the path of a charging, thousand-pound animal? Still, Gray offers a useful introduction to the history and culture of bullfighting and an evocative re-creation of the unique spectacle that is the Pamplona bull run.
David Pitt
Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved "RUNNING WITH THE BULLS makes me want to lace up my running shoes and join Gary Gray on the streets of Pamplona. It's a terrific book and a fun read."--
Franco Harris, Member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame "RUNNING WITH THE BULLS is an exciting, must-read for anyone who cares about Spain or is planning a visit there."--Joe Paterno, Head Football Coach, Penn State University -- "It's a terrific book and a fun read."--Franco Harris