

ON TRYING  
TO KEEP STILL  
JENNY DISKI



## On Trying to Keep Still

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## On Trying to Keep Still Jenny Diski

"Recently I retired to my estates, determined to devote myself as far as I could to spending what little life I have left quietly and privately; it seemed to me then that the greatest favour I could do for my mind was to leave it in total idleness..."

Michel de Montaigne

Jenny Diski's attempt to keep still and mentally idle resulted in a year in which she travelled to New Zealand, spent two months almost alone in a cottage in the country and visited the Sámi people of Lapland. Montaigne was alarmed to discover that by staying still his mind 'bolted off like a runaway horse'; Diski, failing to keep still, finds much the same problem and like Montaigne keeps a record of her ramblings both mental and physical hoping as he did in time to make her mind ashamed of itself. Interspersed with ill-tempered descriptions of these trips are digressions on the subject of her sore foot; her childhood desire for 'a condition', thoughts about growing older, spiders, fundamentalism and the problems of keeping warm.

## On Trying to Keep Still Details

Date : Published April 6th 2006 by Little, Brown & Company (first published 2006)

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Author : Jenny Diski

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Genre : Nonfiction, Travel, Writing, Essays, Autobiography, Memoir

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## From Reader Review On Trying to Keep Still for online ebook

### Berit Lundqvist says

What a whining woman! So introvert, so British.

They let me travel for free, and even pay me for doing it, but I don't want to go. I'll go anyway, because I can't say no.. Foreign countries are different. Even my own country is different. It's such a nuisance. I shouldn't have gone. I want to go home. Boo hoo.

Original and well written, though.

The Brexit situation suddenly makes perfect sense.

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### John says

Disturbingly good writing. I'd love to write 5% as well. Few stones are left unturned as she peers deeply into the mind with visionary sentences.

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### Mandy Haggith says

I read this on a boat, doing nothing much except watching the sea go by for days. It was good company, and set me off in the direction of Montaigne. She is a far more entertaining writer than he was, and her philosophising is both funny and deep.

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### Wouter says

Interesting thoughts by Jenny Diski on why we feel the need to travel and see things, while in our imagination visiting new places is at least as good, if not better. She spent two months in a remote farm trying to do as little as possible, but her mind, just like everyone else's, begins to wander after a while. Some very helpful and provoking thoughts, but the last part was somehow less interesting and a bit pale (haha, snowy!). Still interesting enough to keep on reading until the end.

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### Rachel Davies says

love this book

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### Jennifer Williams says

A lovely, gently humorous and completely contrarian 'travel' book. Particularly loved the section in Northern Sweden.

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### **Nicola says**

Always wonderful to be back with Diski. This book is a little bit of a hodgepodge - not a single story, not quite a collection of essays. A few distinct experiences organised around the theme of travel vs stillness, with some of her signature pairing of travel anecdotes and memoir drawn from her childhood experiences. I'd urge new readers not to start here, but it's pretty excellent nonetheless.

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### **Andrea says**

This book really spoke to my own need to experience the stillness of the world. I am definitely interested in reading more of Jenny Diski's writing.

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### **Ade says**

Occasionally a bit frustrating, in that you want to shake her and say, "Look, stop thinking so much about simple tasks like going for a walk and just DO them!", but ultimately reassuring because so much of what she writes accords with your own thoughts as a reluctant traveller, Jenny Diski's paean to not travelling is a fine read. By turns wryly amusing, perceptive and occasionally upsetting, she deftly navigates a series of low key non adventures with humour and acute self-analysis. Much like her travelling, the book doesn't appear to go anywhere whilst keeping you entertained and curious with anticipation along the way. And Diski comes out of it very well herself; may her self-proclaimed old age be a long, happy and enjoyably idle one (but not too idle).

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### **David Chazan says**

When Jenny Diski died, I knew I had to read another one of her books. Read more about her and this non-fiction "travel" book from 2006 in my review here. <https://tcl-bookreviews.com/2016/07/1...>

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### **Kristi-Anna says**

I really enjoy Jenny Diski's style of writing. Entertaining, informative, and honest. I can't wait to read more from her.

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### **Joke says**

Prettige vakantieliteratuur.

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### **John says**

This book's a tough one to categorize - "travel" seems the most comprehensive for me as it's three parts are set in New Zealand, the U. K. (away from Diski's home itself) and Sweden; however, there's plenty of memoir and philosophy-of-life musing, too. The further I got into the Arctic section, the faster I skimmed towards the book's conclusion - then again, Diski admits upfront that she had second thoughts about the trip after it was too late to cancel; the (fixed) pre-arranged itinerary didn't turn out to be what she had in mind, so she did the best she could.

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### **Niklas says**

Witty and original!

The description of the actual travelling was interesting, as well as the interspersed autobiographical stories. Sometimes I got tired of the author's complaining, which reduced the enjoyability somewhat, but overall it was an interesting read. Are all memoirs like this?

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### **Hannah Cook says**

I loved this! And am definitely going to read more of her stuff. She is such a major introvert, I felt she was a kindred spirit. Plus she is hilarious.

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