



# The Devil's Highway: A True Story

By Luis Alberto Urrea

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**In a new 10th anniversary edition: "The single most compelling, lucid, and lyrical contemporary account of the absurdity of U.S. border policy" (*The Atlantic*).**

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## **The Devil's Highway: A True Story By Luis Alberto Urrea Bibliography**

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In May 2001, 26 Mexican men scrambled across the border and into an area of the Arizona desert known as the Devil's Highway. Only 12 made it safely across. American Book Award-winning writer and poet Urrea (*Across the Wire*; *Six Kinds of Sky*; etc.), who was born in Tijuana and now lives outside Chicago, tracks the paths those men took from their home state of Veracruz all the way *norte*. Their enemies were many: the U.S. Border Patrol ("La Migra"); gung-ho gringo vigilantes bent on taking the law into their own hands; the Mexican Federales; rattlesnakes; severe hypothermia and the remorseless sun, a "110 degree nightmare" that dried their bodies and pounded their brains. In artful yet uncomplicated prose, Urrea captivantly tells how a dozen men squeezed by to safety, and how 14 others—whom the media labeled the Yuma 14—did not. But while many point to the group's smugglers (known as coyotes) as the prime villains of the tragedy, Urrea unloads on, in the words of one Mexican consul, "the politics of stupidity that rules both sides of the border." Mexican and U.S. border policy is backward, Urrea finds, and it does little to stem the flow of immigrants. Since the policy results in Mexicans making the crossing in increasingly forbidding areas, it contributes to the conditions that kill those who attempt it. Confident and full of righteous rage, Urrea's story is a well-crafted mélange of first-person testimony, geographic history, cultural and economic analysis, poetry and an indictment of immigration policy. It may not directly influence the forces behind the U.S.'s southern border travesties, but it does give names and identities to the faceless and maligned "wetbacks" and "pollos," and highlights the brutality and unsustainable nature of the many walls separating the two countries. Maps not seen by *PW*.

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From [Booklist](#)

So many illegal immigrants die in the desert Southwest of the U.S. that only notorious catastrophes make headlines. Urrea reconstructs one such incident in the Sonoran Desert, the ordeal of sun and thirst of two dozen men in May 2001, half of whom suffered excruciating deaths. They came from Vera Cruz; their so-called guide came from Guadalajara. Jesus Lopez Ramos was no master of orienteering, however, just an expendable bottom-feeder in the border's human-smuggling racket. Tracing their lives and the routes to the border, Urrea adopts a slangy, surreal style in which the desert landscape shimmers and distorts, while in desiccated border settlements criminals, officials, and vigilantes patrol for human cargo such as the men from Vera Cruz. The imaginative license Urrea takes, paralleling the laconic facts of the case that he incorporates into his narrative, produces a powerful, almost diabolical impression of the disaster and the exploitative conditions at the border. Urrea shows immigration policy on the human level. *Gilbert Taylor*  
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About the Author

Luis Alberto Urrea is the author of several award-winning books inc. *The Hummingbird's Daughter* and *Into the Beautiful North*. His many prizes include an Edgar and he's also the recipient of a citation of excellence from the American Library Association. He is a member of the Latino Literary Hall of Fame

## Users Review

From reader reviews:

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