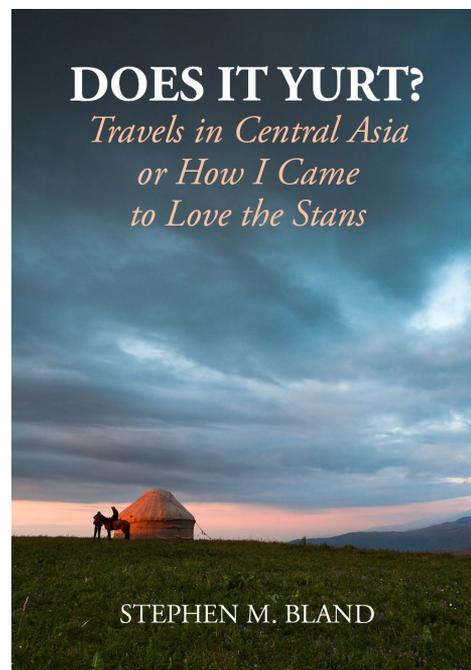




## AWARD-WINNING BOOK ABOUT CENTRAL ASIA LAUNCHED BY BRITISH WRITER AT LITERARY FESTIVAL IN LONDON

Talented British writer [Stephen M. Bland](#) launched his insightful book, [Does it Yurt? Travels in Central Asia or How I Came to Love the Stans](#) within the fifth [Open Eurasian Literature Festival & Book Forum](#), which was held in London from the 25th – 28th November 2016. This award-winning book - which has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from both critics and readers - weaves together the indispensable elements of the travelogue: historical context and current observations of Central Asia, mixing these with a dry sense of humour and amusing anecdotes.



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**Open Eurasian Literature Festival & Book Forum** is a well-established annual event which aims to create a cultural bridge between East and West through the promotion of Eurasian literature on an international stage. Year on year the number of participants and countries represented has expanded, with the **OEBF-2016 attracting a record attendance almost 1,000 visitors, including 60 writers from 16 countries.**

A key part of the festival was the **launch of 15 new books**, spanning fiction, non-fiction, poetry, cookery, history and travelogues, published by Hertfordshire Press and Cambridge International Press. Of this year's events, it was widely agreed that one of the most impressive book launch presentations was delivered by **Stephen M. Bland**, a journalist, author and travel writer specializing on Central Asia, South-East Asia and the Caucasus.



The launch of the book, *Does it Yurt? Travels in Central Asia or How I Came to Love the Stans* took place at two venues: the Yunus Emre Enstitüsü (Turkish Cultural Centre) and University College (UCL). The audience had a wonderful opportunity to see the photographs and videos shot by the author during his journeys throughout Central Asia, and to hear traditional music from the region.

In his award-winning new book, *Does it Yurt? Travels in Central Asia or How I Came to Love the Stans*, Stephen M. Bland takes the reader on a voyage of discovery. A humorous mix of travel, history and reportage, the book explores the region's rich folklore. Travelling to a desert sea, a collapsed Russian gas rig daubed the 'Gate to Hell' and along the 'Heroin Highway' atop the roof of the world, the author sets out to explore the Central Asian nations, unearthing the stories of the people and places behind these fascinating lands.

Following the presentation, Stephen M. Bland was declared **winner of the "Best Newcomer"** category at the festival. The book has already garnered multiple positive reviews from critics who promise that you'll be looking to book your flights to Central Asia as soon as you can put the book down.





*'Written sharply, vividly If you're looking for an antidote to chirpy travel-guide descriptions of Central Asia, then this is the book for you.'* Sam Trantum, author of *Daily Life in Turkmenbashy's Golden Age*.

*'Packed with insights into every corner of the region.'* Paul Wilson, Trailblazer Guides writer and author of *The Alphabet Game*.

*'Stephen M. Bland's writing captures the magical whirlwind flavour of Central Asia in this very perceptive and insightful book. Those who have visited this wonderful part of the world will instantly recognise and reminisce on the many stories of potholed journeys by shared taxi, generous encounters with friendly locals and the inevitable run-ins with bumbling bureaucracy. Those who haven't yet visited will be inspired to book their next adventure as soon as they can put the book down. A thrilling ride from start to finish.'* Nick Rowan, author of *Friendly Steppes: A Silk Road Journey*.

*'Weaves together my favourite elements of a travelogue: historical context and current observations mixed with a dry sense of humour and amusing anecdotes... Does it Yurt? will result in my journey to Central Asia being that much more rewarding.'* Ric Gazarian, author of *7000 Km To Go and Hit the Road India*.

*'Provides unrivalled insight into life within Central Asia today. Interwoven between the fascinating portrayals of everyday characters are illuminating details and observations; creating a story that as rich and expansive as the landscape through which [the author] journeys.'* - Matthew Traver, Filmmaker.

*'Deserves to be shared among friends, as well as having a designated place on your shelves. Stephen M. Bland succeeds in bringing the region alive, and his story is an interesting and hard-to-decline invitation to join in his travels.'* Eugénette Morin, travel writer.





## About us

The [Open Eurasian Literature Festival & Book Forum](#) is an annual international book forum and festival which focuses on the development of literature and publishing in Eurasia and Central Asia. It is a unique event that unites not only publishers and writers, but also readers, libraries and educational institutions.

Established in 2002, [Hertfordshire Press](#) (London) specializes in the publication of contemporary Eurasian literature, literature about the region and reprints of important works, which have not been previously available in the English language. Building on its unique links with the region, Hertfordshire Press offers a broad range of titles, from the first publication in English of a revered Kyrgyz-language novelist, to academic texts and travelogues.

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