

THE ILSE SCHWEPCKE PRIZE



Ursula Martin's *One Woman Walks Europe* wins the inaugural Ilse Schwepcke Prize.

One Woman Walks Europe by Ursula Martin (Honno Press) has won the inaugural Ilse Schwepcke Prize, a new award for the year's best travel book written by a woman. Chosen by an English panel of writers and booksellers, Martin will receive £5,000 in a ceremony at the Frankfurt Book Fair 2025.

Arabella von Friesen, one of three members of the jury for the English prize, said: 'Ursula Martin's five and a half thousand mile walk across Europe is a feat by any measure: for sheer guts, determination, courage both physical and mental, dauntlessness and good humour she is a marvel. A brave woman who has undertaken and completed a truly immense journey, living simply, camping discreetly, grateful for the kindness of strangers, stoic in the face of physical hardship and revelling in the beauty of nature. Fluently written, her narrative is straightforward, bracing, cheerful and companionable: she takes us with her as she walks across the Ukrainian fields, over the Alps, along the Pyrenees, in sun and rain, in balmy early summer days and blizzard, with tales of her encounters and much merriment. The world seems wider after reading this book.'

'We were unanimous in our decision to select Ursula Martin's *One Woman Walks Europe* as the winner of the first ever Ilse Schwepcke Prize,' said Helena Attlee, who, with Stephanie Yeboah, made up the English prize jury. 'All three of us agreed that her account of walking from Ukraine to Wales was a true travel adventure worthy of taking its place in that long tradition. With her sharp eye and gift for lyrical writing, Martin pins the essence of places, people and countries to the page. Her bravery, independence and brute determination in the face of extraordinary challenges will delight readers of all sexes, but it is women who will be especially inspired by the story she tells. Alongside a travelogue rich with detail about the practicalities of everyday life *en route*, she tackles difficult and utterly contemporary subjects in ways that add depth to this captivating story.'

Also on the English shortlist were *One Ukrainian Summer* by Viv Groskop (Ithaka Press) and *Dust and Pomegranates* (Bloomsbury) by Victoria Whitworth.

DER ILSE SCHWEPCKE PREIS



The German-speaking jury awarded the first Ilse-Schwepcke-Preis to **Millay Hyatt** for her book **“Nachtzugtage”** (*Days on the Night Train*):

‘Millay Hyatt writes about the special feeling that comes with travelling by train. She writes about the dynamics and unpredictability of travel, about missed connections and unexpected encounters. Her book is both a user's manual and a declaration of love for the railways. As a philosopher, she also thinks about many things while travelling and writing that give us food for thought. For example, how much more open and permeable Europe used to be. Millay Hyatt's narrative is as unpredictable and surprising as changing trains and connections: in wonderfully gripping, poetic and clear language, she combines personal observations and regional studies, city atmospheres and descriptions of nature, bringing encounters with a wide variety of people to life in vivid episodes.’

Barbara Schwepcke, with her uncle Karl-Burkhard Haus, set up the prize in memory of her mother, Ilse, a devotee of travel writing and founding editor of the Armchair Traveller series produced by Barbara's company Haus Publishing, based in London. Honouring Ilse's roots in both Germany and the UK, the Ilse Schwepcke Prize has a German-language sister prize (Der Ilse-Schwepcke-Preis) awarded alongside it for the best travel book by a woman writing in German. ‘I want to thank the two juries,’ said Barbara Schwepcke. ‘My mother would have been thrilled by their selection!’

Both prizes will be awarded at a ceremony during the Frankfurt Book Fair on Friday, 17 October at 5.30pm on the Leseinsel der unabhängigen Verlage (Hall 3.1 C105).

For more information about the prizes please visit:

<https://www.ilseschwepckeprize.co.uk/>

<https://www.ilseschwepckepreis.de/>

The two Ilse Schwepcke Prizes are administered by the Society of Authors in London and Kirchner Kommunikation in Berlin respectively.

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