

Travel show enthusiasts will enjoy ‘The Reluctant Traveler’

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 03 March 2023 03:45



Rating: ««««

out of «««««

Running Time: 8 Episodes (each between 34 and 39 minutes in length)

This documentary travel series is now available to stream on Apple TV+.

Apparently, 75-year-old Canadian comedic actor Eugene Levy isn't much of a traveler. Despite this, Apple TV+ has convinced the performer to venture out across the planet for a new program on their streaming service. To be fair, the concept of putting a personality in front of the cameras as a reluctant visitor to new lands isn't particularly uncommon. The British 2010 – 2012 series *An Idiot Abroad* and the 2017 – 2021 show *Jack Whitehall: Travels with My Father* did it well, though often taking glee in the discomfort of some participants' issues with customs from other countries.

Levy is a more low-key host and lead in *The Reluctant Traveler* series. By comparison with

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other programs, he is much friendlier and genial (he is, after all, Canadian). In fact, he appears only mildly uneasy and uncomfortable with venturing into the unknown.

As a result, the first episode or two come across as a bit stiff. Personally, I’m not sure if the episodes were shot in order. But it does seem like the star slowly gets more comfortable in his role and relaxed being around new people. When this occurs, he starts delivering some very funny off-the-cuff remarks and engaging in deeper conversations with locals. As the show progresses, it eventually finds its footing and becomes quite entertaining.

The first episode takes Levy to Lapland, located in Northern Finland. As in other travel shows, he’s given impressive accommodation and then undertakes a series of unusual activities in the Nordic wilderness. This includes dog-sledding, assisting a reindeer keeper, sampling local cuisine (also reindeer, as it turns out), and being asked to partake in something close to an icy polar bear plunge in frozen waters.

The photography is gorgeous, including beautiful drone footage of the wilderness, as well as some great shots of the performer being pulled through a forest with reindeer food and the animals in pursuit. It all looks impressive, although the actor doesn’t have much to do except exchange pleasantries and comment on the bitter cold.

However, as the series progresses, Levy does make an impression. He admits to some phobias (like riding in helicopters) and by the time he arrives in Venice, Italy, the host is much chattier, as are those whom he speaks with. The humorous interchanges all seem to come a little easier.

By the fourth episode in Utah, the actor appears completely comfortable as host. Levy jokes more naturally with the hotel staff. He even opens up to guides about the beauty of Amangiri, Utah and the surrounding Navajo Nation. These stops feel very authentic, as does his journey away from familiar sites in order to share dinner with a guide.

Another impressive episode late in the series takes Levy to Kruger National Park in South Africa. He’s put up in unique accommodations – essentially a train car on a bridge overlooking a very active wildlife area. Between safari trips, the nervous actor delivers some of the best observations and fears. Particularly memorable is when he expresses unease at the sound of dangerous animals around him in the night and also worries about hearing an unfortunate

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creature being torn apart by predators while he tries to sleep. It's one of the strongest episodes in the series.

Final stops in Portugal and Japan also deliver some great moments.

The Reluctant Traveler isn't that much of a departure from other travel shows, but it does differ from a few in that the 75-year-old lead, while at times uncomfortable with his surroundings, seems genuinely interested in learning more about people and other cultures while visiting scenic locales. And, as a result, viewers also learn a little more about these places. The show is beautifully photographed and offers some striking imagery of incredible sites around the world. Anyone who enjoys travel shows and is patient with this newbie host will ultimately appreciate what they see.

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