



BY THE BOOK

TRAVEL INSPIRED BY AUTHORS
IS ENRICHING AND ENTERTAINING

BY
KRISTIANNE HUNTSBERGER

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HORTLY AFTER

moving to Seattle a decade ago, I boarded a ferry and made the half-hour crossing over Puget Sound to Bainbridge Island. The salt air was brisk, but sunlight dappled the water and the tops of tall Douglas-firs that bordered Bainbridge's shore. Pedaling my bicycle through rural neighborhoods where conifer-circled homes gave way to fields and orchards felt somehow familiar. I'd never been to Bainbridge, but I had read David Guterson's novel, *Snow Falling on Cedars*, a mid-'90s literary sensation that cast a very human light on the World War II internment of West Coast Japanese-Americans. Though Bainbridge resident Guterson set his novel on fictional San Piedro Island, many locales in the book are based on actual Bainbridge sites. On Northeast Day Road, for instance, I rode past the Suyematsu Farm, one of the many Japanese-American farms that helped the island's fruit production gain fame in the early 20th century. And riding near the island's deep and sturdy forest, I recalled what Hatsue, the book's heroine, had felt about these woods.

"The world was incomprehensibly intricate, and yet this forest made a simple sense in her heart that she felt nowhere else."

Our world is indeed incomprehensibly intricate, now more than ever, and calling on the works of famous authors is a delightful and meaningful way to frame travel. The West has been home to many estimable entries in world literature, from Jack London to Steinbeck and Michener to Guterson, and one could easily devote a dozen trips to Western and Pacific locales featured in famous books. Add in the rest of North America and it would take years before you'd have to set your sights farther afield in Europe, South America and Africa. In other words, travel offers a vast doorway readers can step through.

Guterson says that though his novel's fictional

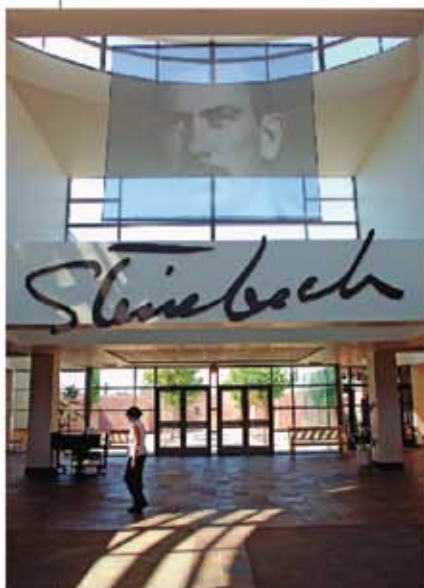
San Piedro Island would be geographically situated farther north in the San Juan Islands, he wrote the book on Bainbridge and it presents the clearest connection to the story. He suggests the best spot for literary travelers to visit is Battle Point Park, where the Fairy Dell trail leads down to a public beach, the place where his two young characters dug geoduck clams and shared their first kiss. "That dell and the beach give a feel for the book," says Guterson. "I wrote it living in that area and I had Fairy Dell in mind."

The Japanese American Exclusion Memorial depicting the WWII imprisonments, located on the site of the old ferry dock near Pritchard Park, is another of Guterson's must-see spots on the island. In summer, Bainbridge visitors can buy berries at the Suyematsu farm stand or visit the farmers market (April–November), just down the street from the Bainbridge Island Historical Museum in town. Visitors to the island this March, when Bainbridge Performing Arts presents the stage adaptation of Guterson's novel, will be able to witness a living display of the story in the very place it was born, an event that perfectly reflects the quietly redemptive nature of the book.

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Bainbridge Island's Japanese American Exclusion Memorial is on the site from which 227 island residents were shipped to internment camps during World War II—an event pivotal to David Guterson's *Snow Falling on Cedars*, as was Fairy Dell trail (left).



Anne Rice's "Vampire Chronicles" characters often "visit" New Orleans' iconic Cafe du Monde; and Maria Semple's Bernadette took solace in Seattle's Molly Moon ice cream. Monterey Bay is central to most of John Steinbeck's Nobel Prize-winning work, such as *Cannery Row*; travelers today can visit the Steinbeck Museum in Salinas, and stroll past Doc's lab (below left) and restored cannery buildings.



A trip inspired by a book is like visiting a wonderfully interesting friend, who happens to have time to show you the best places in town. After all, a sense of place is one of the chief attributes of great literature, and most great authors focus on that. Literary tours offer immediate familiarity with a place and a sense of purpose as you search out spots from the story. Our favorite authors create vivid descriptions that transport us to the places in their books. When we actually travel to those places, we can step into the story and become part of it ourselves. The descriptive skills of John Steinbeck and Jack London help us smell the moist soil and sun-kissed lettuce of Salinas Valley, or hear the rhythm of the dog team's breath and the crunch of sled runners through the Alaska snow. James Michener's clever storytelling animates the history of Hawai'i, and Cheryl Strayed's generous emotional transparency makes the wild West Coast mountains familiar. To me, visiting such places after reading the authors' books feels more like a homecoming than just another trip.



IN FACT, a branch of the travel marketplace is devoted to the bookish traveler. Companies such as Classical Pursuits curate tours to explore places with connections to notable authors or books, from Italy to Iceland to New Orleans. A tour of the latter's extravagant literary landscape includes a reading list of Tennessee Williams, Kate Chopin, Julie Smith and Ernest Gaines. Then visitors roam the city to see how the urban landscape seeps into a literary imagination and is revealed in the pages of beloved books. Though Williams' legacy is the most palpable and has inspired many opportunities for visitors, from the Tennessee Williams–New Orleans Literary Festival in March to year-round walking tours of the French Quarter, the city has hosts of tours designed to bring readers closer to other authors, including William Faulkner and John Kennedy Toole. Amid the color and energy of New Orleans, a literary tour allows a traveler to frame personal connections with the city. You cannot ride Williams' Desire streetcar any more—but a journey across the city on the St. Charles streetcar is a marvelous substitute. And you can certainly enjoy late-night coffee at Cafe du Monde, perhaps even at the same tables that Williams, Faulkner and Anne Rice utilized.

Place has such strong presence in the work of John Steinbeck that mapping locations from his work could lead literary pilgrims across virtually all of California's Salinas Valley, from the ranches near King City to the misty shores of

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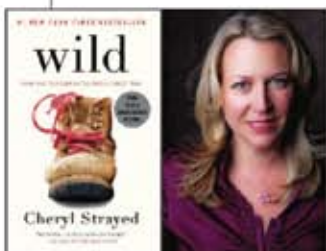


James Michener's epic bestseller, *Hawaii*, describes the volcanic activity that formed the islands—still visible today at

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, where the Kilauea volcano has been erupting since 1983. The Hawaiian royal family crest decorates the gates of 'Iolani Palace, in Honolulu. Skagway's Chilkoot Trail still beckons travelers. Jack London trekked through here on adventures that became *Call of the Wild*; modern travelers enjoy a rail journey on the White Pass & Yukon. Oregon's Bridge of the Gods is where Cheryl Strayed finished her journey in *Wild*.

Pacifica. Salinas embraced its native-son literary legend, the 1962 Nobel Prize winner, by creating the National Steinbeck Center, an educational facility devoted to the author and the region's agriculture and art. Growing up near Salinas I made countless trips through the neatly lined broccoli and lettuce fields of Salinas over to Monterey. While I climbed the golden hills near the coast I would imagine Mack and the boys from Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* driving their rickety old Model T in reverse up the grade on their way to find frogs for Doc.

In Monterey a literary traveler can stroll the Cannery



Row neighborhood and even spot the familiar faces of Mack and the boys in John Cerney's mural on the recreation trail above Bruce Ariss Way, near where the Palace Flophouse would have been. Around the corner is where Steinbeck set Lee Chong's store, based on the Wing Chong building. Next door, where a literary traveler can now order coffee or ice cream, would have been La Ida bar, where one of the Flophouse boys concocted the ultimate mixed drink while working as fill-in bartender. Doc's lab, Western Biological, is just down the street, in the shadow of the Monterey Bay Aquarium. A bust of Steinbeck himself greets visitors at the entrance to the waterfront park, kitty-corner to the picturesque Monterey Canning Company building. The names and some features of the place may have changed over the years, but a Steinbeck pilgrim can stroll the streets, under the cannery crossovers, breathe in the ocean air and picture the place when Steinbeck walked the same route.

Traveling to a present-day literary locale can help travelers feel more directly part of the story. Maria Semple's popular 2012 novel, *Where'd You Go Bernadette?*, is a map of contemporary Seattle's places and personalities. Though Bernadette, a Los Angeles transplant and architect-in-hiding, makes clear her disdain for Seattle's drivers, urban planning



and polite passivity, the novel is studded with gems of Seattle's sites. Many days (and many calories) could be consumed while visiting local food purveyors Semple highlights in the book: Molly Moon ice cream, Macrina Bakery in Belltown, Beecher's Cheese in the Pike Place Market and Tom Douglas' restaurant, Lola, where coconut cream pie helped Bernadette believe she could be happy in Seattle.

Other landmarks the literary tourist can lift from Semple's book include the downtown Public Library, the original Starbucks cafe, the International Fountain at the Seattle Center and the Space Needle's rotating restaurant, where Bernadette sends around a birthday card to be signed by other diners. The unsympathetic main character inspires an unexpected draw to the Emerald City. It turns out there is

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much to love, and even Bernadette longs for the view across Puget Sound, over Guterson's Bainbridge Island to the snowy Olympic Mountains; the same view a visitor might see from Marshall Park on Queen Anne Hill.

In his 1959 novel *Hawaii*, James Michener tells an epic history of the islands through the adventures of his colorful cast of characters, but the real hero of the book is the place itself, whose geologic history comprises a much-discussed first 10 pages. Traveling with Michener's book gives literary travelers a full itinerary to connect more closely to each of the islands. Maui visitors can experience the old whaling village, Lahaina, or take a dive to the sunken *Carthaginian II*, a sailing ship replica reminiscent of the brig, *Thetis*, which Michener's missionaries used to reach the Islands. On Kaua'i, the Old Sugar Mill in Kōloa was the first commercially successful sugar plantation and Michener's model for Wild Whip Hoxworth's plantation. On O'ahu, the landmark 'Iolani Palace depicts Hawaiian royalty, history of the island kingdom and its U.S. annexation. The prehistory of the islands is on vivid display at Volcanoes National Park on the Big Island; the Kīlauea Iki Trail along the north rim of the crater crosses a breathtaking volcanic landscape. Taking guided trips in Kealahou Bay—where Captain Cook met his fate in 1779—puts readers in touch with Michener's tales of the momentous history of the place.

On other occasions, a by-the-book trip brings us closer to the meaning of a beloved volume. To learn more about Jack London and the creation of his Klondike masterpieces a traveler must set out for Alaska. Though London wrote most of his work back home in California, it was his experience in Alaska and the Yukon that inspired his most influential books. Much like London's own trip north, the canine hero of *The Call of the Wild* was swept from the pastoral California coast up to the Yukon gateway, Dyea. Making a journey along the book's route is more accessible now than in London's

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time. Historic Skagway, north of Juneau, is a starting point where literary travelers can get a taste for the historic region. In summer months, a walking tour of the town and the Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park Visitors Center, housed in the White Pass and Yukon Railroad Depot, helps you learn about the life London and his contemporaries would have found when they landed in Alaska in 1897. Travelers heeding the call of the wild can also head up to Dyea, the Skagway neighborhood that is the Alaska gateway to the Chilkoot trail, the 33-mile journey that led prospectors into the

Entitled Tours

Popular literature has inspired many travel destinations and tour companies to show off their literary connections.

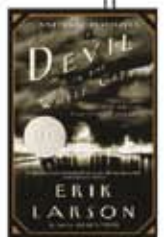
Twilighting: Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series set fans flocking to Forks, Washington. The Forks Chamber of Commerce created a self-guided tour in response, including a map of the best spots to connect with the story and its characters. The town even dedicates the week-



end of September 13 to Meyer and her heroine, Bella.

The beat goes on: The walking tour of North Beach, sponsored by The Beat Museum in San Francisco on Wednesdays and Saturdays, explores the bookstores, cafes and other landmarks pivotal to Beat Generation heroes Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Neal Cassady and Lawrence Ferlinghetti. A self-guided tour app is available from EveryTrail, leading visitors through the neighborhood, from one Beat highlight to another.

Devilish Chicago: Erik Larson's best-selling book *The Devil in the White City* has inspired a popular city tour. Led by Weird Chicago Tours, visitors are taken to places key to Larson's story, H.H. Holmes and the Chicago World's Fair.

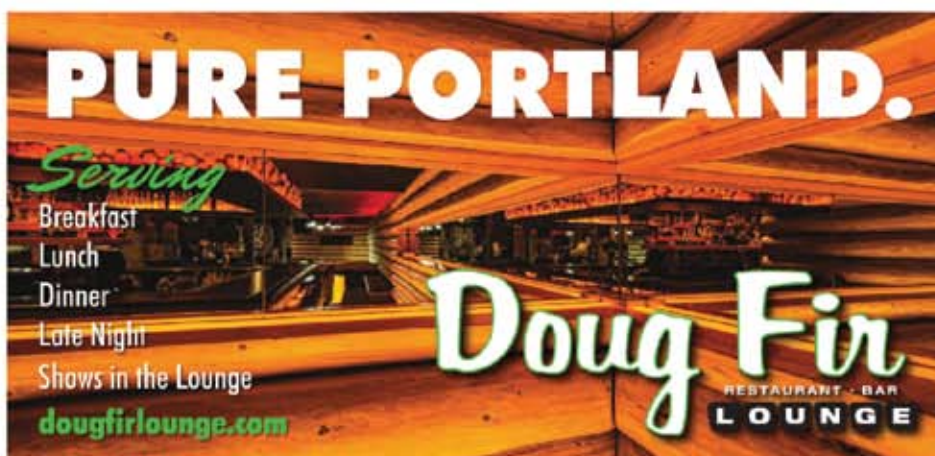


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Yukon. Visitors today can tour the former town site and hike the trail to experience scattered remnants of the gold rush period and the ever-inspiring, immense Alaska landscape. Stepping further into the unparalleled natural world that enthralled London, a traveler might feel the same call from deep in the forest that makes the wild more familiar than previously imagined.

Following Cheryl Strayed's 2012 book *Wild* along the Pacific Crest Trail and through her emotional journey as she mourns the loss of her mother provides a



Paging your tour guide

Tours based on work by local authors can provide unique insight into a destination.

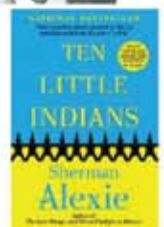
Follow **Sherman Alexie's** Indian narrator, Jackson Jackson, as he reclaims his grandmother's regalia in Seattle in "What You Pawn I Will Redeem," from

Ten Little Indians:

- **Pike Place Market**, "panning the handle" with Jackson.
- **Washington State ferry terminal, Pier 52**, where the hero sells *Real Change*.
- Singing traditional songs with three Aleutian cousins at the **Waterfront Park**.
- **Occidental Park**, where Jackson wins money on a lottery scratch ticket.



CHASE JARVIS



In his first novel, *Where the Air Is Clear*, **Carlos Fuentes** described Mexico City as an enormous village. Follow his cast through the historic neighborhoods:

- **Zona Rosa**, where Bobó hosted bohemian parties.
- Federico Robles' offices near **Alameda Park** and the **Palace of Fine Arts**.
- After picking fights in the bull arena, Tuno, Fifo, Beto and Gabriel went to **Plaza Garibaldi**, a mariachi center.
- In **Colonia Cuauhtémoc**, Norma Larragoiti enjoyed *helados* (ice cream) with Rodrigo Pola at a soda fountain on Paris Street.



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more personal example for me. The PCT is an impressive natural passage between Mexico and Canada, tracing the Sierra Nevada and the Cascades, the ranges that serve as backbone to the West Coast. Strayed writes detailed accounts of her route and a truly inspired reader could certainly follow her course in full; or in more modest day trips. A hike on the trail near Ashland, Oregon, could trace Strayed's own day trip to the beach at Brookings. Traveling with the book to Crater Lake or to Bagby Hot Springs and Timberline Lodge at Mount Hood brings each place off the page.

I read Strayed's memoir after I lost my own mother. The journey she described in *Wild* was inspiringly transformative, but I was unprepared to hike several months in the wilderness. I went instead to the Bridge of the Gods in Cascade Locks, Oregon, where Strayed finished her 1,100-mile journey. From the Eagle Creek trailhead I climbed into the woods, thinking about Strayed's injured feet, the community she built on the trail and her vision of giant ice cream cones at Eastwind Drive-In that kept her clomping down toward the Columbia River. It is easy to savor the round-trip 12-mile Eagle Creek hike past mossy-limbed conifers and awe-inspiring waterfalls. On my return, I emerged from the trees to see the Columbia River flowing below in the sun-spangled afternoon and I felt a sudden buoyancy. Though I'd not gone nearly so far or trekked for so long as Strayed, something about her journey went with me in my hike and became part of my experience.

When we journey somewhere, inspired by a book, we come closer to becoming part of the story we admire. Perhaps I was following Strayed's story along the PCT to stand near where she finally reached her goal and celebrated her newfound strength. Or maybe I've come here so that her personal tale of a transformative journey will guide me toward my own. ▲

Kristianne Huntsberger is a Seattle author, storyteller and teacher.

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