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Travel Guides– An Overview

By Victor K. Pryles

Travel Guidebooks– An Overview

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You can get reliable, useful information from guidebooks. Yet, some are better than others and often, it's important to know what you're looking for when you travel, what your goals are and what your pocketbook can handle.

As I often tell my fellow Traveling Paupers, a guidebook is just that a guide. Not a set of rules that are fixed in stone. Never let any guidebook chain you down to a fixed itinerary. Be adventurous, add your own mix of wonder and discovery to the trip you plan, and use your guidebook as an introduction to the locale, not the final arbiter of what is valuable.

That being said, I'd like to explore some of the guidebooks I've found useful in making trips around the world. It is, by no means, a comprehensive listing of all the books available to you. But this sampling should give you a very good starting point to discover what travel books can offer.

The Michelin Red Guides

Provide detailed information about European hotels and restaurants, while the Green Guides focus on European art, history, and places of interest. They tend to be best suited to travel that isn't too budget conscious. Upscale.

The Fielding Guides

Provides a candid, well written guide especially good at finding off–beat, unusual destinations. I recommend them to Paupers that wish to travel off the beaten track. Unique.

Fodor's Travel Guides

Travel Guides– An Overview

Recently celebrating their 60th birthday with almost 100 titles in the Gold Line series. They emphasize the West, but the Fodor's Guides cover countries though– out the world. They provide good historical and cultural information as well as practical recommendations. I like it for those who wish to stay on the middle of the road. Perennial Bestseller.

The Frommer Series

The old \$5. A Day series has become the \$40 a Day series. They offer touring guides, city guides, and special editions. While emphasizing Europe and the United States they take pains to describe restaurants, hotels and nightlife as well. Budget.

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The Lonely Planet Series

Called, simply enough, the LP, they have earned a great reputation for worldwide budget and independent travel. There are five series offered, but my favorite is the On A Shoestring guide, coving everything from a specific country, to a region or continent for the low budget traveler. Eclectic.

The Travel Handbook Series

This series contains more than 50 books from Moon Publications and are updated annually. That's their greatest value in my judgment. Contemporary.

Europe Through The Back Door

Authored by Rick Steves. You get an itinerary and "must see" list of sights for limited European trips. A no brainer.

The Rough Guides

Focuses on college–age travelers in Europe. Much the same flavor as you will find in the LP series; irreverent and directed to the budget conscious. Street smart.

A good guidebook makes travel vastly easier. Use them even when you're only traveling in your arm chair. The best spark your imagination and lead you to unknown discoveries and adventure.

Victor K. Pryles is the author of: "Travel Cheap– Travel Well!"– Confessions Of A Traveling Pauper. His website offers a free e–course: "The Top 100 Travel Planning Websites" and a complete forum, articles and more.

[Http://www.paupertravel.com](http://www.paupertravel.com)

Caribbean Travel Guide

By Burt Cotton

All there is to know about the vacation destination of your dreams - that is exactly what a Caribbean travel guide offers. But are Caribbean travel guides really godsend? Or are they just patronizing materials designed for commercial purposes?

Well, they're a little of both actually. After all, the people behind Caribbean travel guides do need a source of income in order to continue to publish their guides. But a tremendous amount of research has been placed in these guides to just dismiss them as useless resource material.

What else is more nifty, informative and convenient than a Caribbean travel guide?

Sure, the Internet may prove more updated when it comes to information, but you can't carry the Internet everywhere. And believe it or not, it's always much more gratifying to pull out a Caribbean travel guide from your carry case, flip a few pages open, then slip it right back when you're tired of reading. It sure beats having to wait in the airport, sitting bored silly and wondering whether or not your flight's going to be delayed.

That said, don't cling to travel guides religiously. Many travelers make that mistake. They are not the bibles that they are made out to be by some people. You should know that published materials, including travel guides, are out of date the moment they are published, because by then, there would have been new updated material that came up and it would be too late to include them.

So, how are you supposed to use Caribbean travel guides then? How would you know which information to believe and which facts are outdated? Unfortunately, there is no exact answer to that. To get the most out of your Caribbean travel guide, use them sparingly for basic orientation. So once you have the basics right down to a tee, go out there and discover the towns and cities on your own. That is, after all, what traveling is all about - adventure and discovery of new things. At the very least, when all other signs look foreign, the information on museums and places of interest are great.

However, when it comes to hotels and restaurants, each to his own taste and budget. Remember that bargains rise in price with popularity, so there's every bit of chance that that hot new deal in your Caribbean travel guide isn't much of a deal anymore, considering how pricey it has become. And then sometimes, too, the places get easily full with foreigners and travelers like you, so you can't always expect your Caribbean travel guide to point you in the right place all the time.

Then, if you do wander around on your own, then you will surely find quality rooms with reasonable prices. They may be located in out-of-the-way places that Caribbean travel guide writers may not know about. Remember that because you in the destination, you are in far better place to get what you want out of your vacation.

So to close it off, don't be a sad type who writes to say that "it wasn't like what you said in the book." Here's a tip: open your eyes and explore for yourself!

Burt Cotton

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