
'READ' list from THE TRAVEL BOOK by country:

Afghanistan

Robert Byron's *The Road to Oxiana* or Eric Newby's *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush*, both all-time travel classics; Idris Shah's *Afghan Caravan* – a compendium of spellbinding Afghan tales, full of heroism, adventure and wisdom

Albania

Broken April by Albania's best-known contemporary writer, Ismail Kadare, which deals with the blood vendettas of the northern highlands before the 1939 Italian invasion. *Biografi* by Lloyd Jones is a fanciful story set in the immediate post-communist era, involving the search for Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha's alleged double

Algeria

Between Sea and Sahara: An Algerian Journal by Eugene Fromentin, Blake Robinson and Valeria Orlando, a mix of travel writing and history; or *Nedjma* by the Algerian writer Kateb Yacine, an autobiographical account of childhood, love and Algerian history

Andorra

Andorra by Peter Cameron, a darkly comic novel set in a fictitious Andorran mountain town. *Approach to the History of Andorra* by Lídia Armengol Vila is a solid work published by the Institut d'Estudis Andorrans.

Angola

Angola Beloved by T Ernest Wilson, the story of a pioneering Christian missionary's struggle to bring the gospel to an Angola steeped in witchcraft

Anguilla

Green Cane and Juicy Flotsam: Short Stories by Caribbean Women, or check out the island's history in Donald E Westlake's *Under an English Heaven*

Antarctica

Ernest Shackleton's *Aurora Australis*, the only book ever published in Antarctica, and a personal account of Shackleton's 1907-09 *Nimrod* expedition; Nikki Gemmell's *Shiver*, the story of a young journalist who finds love and tragedy on an Antarctic journey

Antigua & Barbuda

Jamaica Kincaid's novel *Annie John*, which recounts growing up in Antigua. Desmond Nicholson, president of the Antigua historical society, has published several works on the country's history, including *Antigua, Barbuda and Redonda: A Historical Sketch*

Argentina

Patricia Sagastizabal's *A Secret for Julia*, which won Argentina's equivalent to the Pulitzer Prize in 2000. For a humorous account of Buenos Aires life, pick up Miranda France's *Bad Times in Buenos Aires*

Armenia

The Crossing Place – a thought-provoking journey through the Armenian diaspora

Aruba & Netherlands Antilles

Nights in Aruba by Andrew Holleran, which tells the story of a gay man who spends his early years on Aruba before heading to the USA

Australia

Remembering Babylon by David Malouf, a compelling insight into the social dynamics of early-colonial Australia; Bruce Chatwin's controversial Songlines for a look at the Aboriginal lay of the land

Austria

The Left-Handed Woman by Peter Handke; the Nibelungenlied, an epic poem of passion, faithfulness and revenge in the Burgundian court at Worms; or Wittgenstein's Tractatus, a seminal book in the field of linguistic philosophy

Azerbaijan

Mehmed bin Suleyman Fuzuli's sensitive rendition of the classic Leyli and Majnun, which influenced many Azeri writers right up to the 19th century

Bahamas

Brian Antoni's Paradise Overdose, about the 1980s drug- and sex-addled Bahamian high-life

Bahrain

Geoffrey Bibby's Looking for Dilmun, an archaeologist's account of early excavations on Bahrain. It also paints a fascinating picture of life there in the 1950s and 1960s.

Bangladesh

Gitanjali by Rabindranath Tagore, the great Bengali poet and winner of the 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature; James J. Novak's Bangladesh: Reflections on the Water, a good all-round introduction to the country

Barbados

The acclaimed novel The Castle of My Skin by Bajan author George Lamming, in which he tells what it was like growing up black in colonial Barbados

Belarus

Haradsky's Two Souls, a poignant expression of the repressed state of Belarus after WWI

Belgium

A Tall Man in a Low Land by Englishman Harry Pearson for a humorous look at the country; Hugo Claus' The Sorrow of Belgium – wartime Belgium through the eyes of a Flemish adolescent

Belize

Belizious Cuisine, a collection of 200 dishes that demonstrate the richness of Belize's multicultural past

Benin

Bruce Chatwin's The Viceroy of Ouidah, which tells the story of a Brazilian trader stranded on the 'Slave Coast' in the 17th century

Bermuda

Bermuda's Story by Terry Tucker, the island's most highly regarded historian

Bhutan

A Baby in a Backpack to Bhutan, an engaging, amusing adventure by Bunty Avieson, who quit her job and travelled with her newborn baby to Bhutan

Bolivia

The Fat Man from La Paz: Contemporary Fiction from Bolivia, a collection of 20 short stories edited by Rosario Santos. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's memorable The Lost World was inspired by tales of the northeastern Bolivian plateaux.

Bosnia & Hercegovina

Misha Glenny's The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War, a British journalist's first-hand account of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia

Botswana

Bayeyi & Hambukushu: Tales from the Okavango (edited by Thomas J Larson), a compilation of oral poetry and stories from the Okavango Panhandle region; or Alexander McCall Smith's popular mystery series, The No 1 Ladies' Detective Agency

Brazil

The Alchemist by novelist Paulo Coelho, or The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization by Gilberto Freyre, the most famous book on Brazil's colonial past

Brunei

Time and the River by Prince Mohamed Bolkiah, penned by the sultan's youngest brother

Bulgaria

Bulgarian Rhapsody: The Best of Balkan Cuisine by Linda J. Forristal – an informative cookbook with delicious recipes and snippets of Bulgarian culture and history

Burkina Faso

The Maxims, Thoughts and Riddles of the Mossi by Dim-Dolobson Ouedraogo, which offers a glimpse of Burkina Faso barely 30 years after the French colonised it

Burundi

Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah's Burundi on the Brink 1993–95, a heart-rending account by the former UN ambassador about his efforts to bring peace

Cambodia

The River of Time, by John Swain – a journalistic memoir of the Khmer Rouge and the tragedy of people who find themselves in situations beyond their control

Cameroon

The Poor Christ of Bomb, Mongo Beti's cynical recounting of the failure of a missionary to convert the people of a small village, or Kenjo Jumbani's novel The White Man of God, which deals with the country's colonial experience

Canada

Margaret Atwood's Booker Prize-winning Blind Assassin, and Michael Ondaatje's In the Skin of a Lion, both set in 1930s Canada

Cape Verde

Poet Jorge Barbosa's Arquipélago, which is laden with melancholic reflections on the sea, and longings for liberation

Cayman Islands

The Cayman Islands: The Beach and Beyond by Martha K Smith – excellent for those who think being a beach bunny is boring

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic: The Continent's Hidden Heart, a social history by Thomas E O'Toole

Chad

Chad: A Nation in Search of Its Future by Mario J Azevedo and Emmanuel U Nnadozie, presenting an economic, political and social view of the nation

Chile & Easter Island

Isabel Allende's House of the Spirits, the story of a Chilean family depicted with modern-day realism and a dose of the supernatural

China

The Search for Modern China by Jonathan D Spence – probably the most readable attempt to encompass Chinese modern history in a single volume; the novels of Pearl S Buck, including The Good Earth and Imperial Woman

Colombia

One Hundred Years of Solitude by Nobel prize winner Gabriel García Márquez, or anything by José Asunción Silva, perhaps the country's best poet

Comoros & Mayotte

The Comoros Islands: Struggle Against Dependency in the Indian Ocean, by Malyn Newitt, which outlines the turbulent recent history of the region

Congo, Democratic Republic of (ZAÏRE)

Read about Mobutu's looting as a form of government in Michaela Wrong's In The Footsteps of Mr Kurtz; or The Catastrophist by Ronan Bennett, a novel built around Patrice Lumumba, the charismatic leader of the fight for independence from Belgium

Congo, Republic of

Congo Journey by naturalist Redmond O'Hanlon, who explores the swamplands of the Congo with descriptive style

Cook Islands

Island to Oneself, the account of hermit Tom Neale, who lived on Suvarrow Atolls

Costa Rica

Costa Rica: A Traveler's Literary Companion, 26 short stories that capture the soul of the county

Côte d'Ivoire

Bernard Dadié's Climbié, an autobiographical account of his childhood, or Maurice Bandaman's novel Le Fils de la Femme Mâle

Croatia

Rebecca West's Black Lamb and Grey Falcon, a classic account of a 1930s trip through the region; Slavenka Drakulic's Café Europa, an insightful series of essays on Croatia and Eastern Europe

Cuba

Trading with the Enemy: A Yankee Travels Through Castro's Cuba by Tom Miller – it's a rich feast of Cuban lore, and a great travel book about Cuba

Cyprus

Journey Into Cyprus by Colin Thubron, a classic Cyprus travelogue

Czech Republic

Milan Kundera's The Book of Laughter and Forgetting, in which the absurdity of the communist era is deftly woven with themes of love, memory and music; or Bruce Chatwin's Utz, a novella about porcelain and alchemy set in Prague's Jewish quarter

Denmark

Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow by Peter Høeg, a suspense set in Copenhagen; or for a change of pace, Kierkegaard's philosophical works or Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales

Djibouti

Khamsine, a collection of lyrical, sometimes semi-erotic, poems by Djiboutian poet William JF Syad

Dominica

Voyage in the Dark by Dominica's most celebrated author, Jean Rhys, or Dominica's other noted novelist, Phyllis Shand Allfrey, who is best known for The Orchid House

Dominican Republic

Julia Alvarez's In the Time of the Butterflies, the lyrical tale of 1960s political martyrs, the Mirabal sisters; or Feast of the Goat by Mario Vargas Llosa, about the Trujillo regime

East Timor

Timothy Mo's The Redundancy of Courage, which uses the fictional country of Danu to depict East Timor's struggle during the Indonesian occupation. Luis Cardoso's Crossing: A Story of East Timor is a memoir of growing up in East Timor under Portuguese and Indonesian rule

Ecuador & the Galápagos Islands

Jorge Icaza's *Huaspungo (The Villagers)*, a naturalistic tale of the miserable conditions experienced on Andean haciendas in the early 20th century. *Galápagos* by Kurt Vonnegut is a comic, cautionary, evolutionary tale

Egypt

Max Rodenbeck's *Cairo: The City Victorious*, a fascinating history and first-person travelogue. For true insight into Egyptian culture, nothing tops Naguib Mahfouz's epic and sometimes ponderous *The Cairo Trilogy*

El Salvador

Cuentos de Barro (Tales of Mud) by Salarrué (one of El Salvador's most famous writers); the poetry of Manlio Argueta and Francisco Rodríguez

England

The English by Jeremy Paxman, an exploration of the English psyche by one of the country's toughest TV interviewers

Equatorial Guinea

Mary Kingsley's 1897 classic *Travels in West Africa*, which details her trip spent slogging through the rainforest to gather specimens for a natural history museum

Eritrea

Eritrea at a Glance, edited by Mary Houdek and Leonardo Oriolo, for a fantastic introduction to the country, particularly the capital Asmara. For a gripping yarn of the struggle for independence read *Even the Stones Are Burning* by Roy Pateman

Estonia

anything by Lydia Koidula – Estonia's first lady of poetry; or Jaan Kross's *The Czar's Madman*

Ethiopia

Graham Hancock's *The Sign and the Seal*, a fascinating historical detective story which traces the Ark of the Covenant to Ethiopia, while providing an overview of the country's history and culture

Falkland Islands

The Battle for the Falklands, a cool assessment of the politics and strategy of the 1982 war by Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins

Fiji

Fiji's most popular coffee-table book, *Children of the Sun*, with photos by Glen Craig and poetry by Bryan McDonald

Finland

Anything by Aleksis Kivi, who founded modern Finnish literature with *Seven Brothers*, a story of brothers who try to escape civilisation in favour of the forest

France

Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, a 19th-century classic about rural life and deluded passions

French Guiana

Henri Charrière's classic *Papillon* for a readable first-person account of the infamous penal colony on Devil's Island

Gabon

African Silences, by Peter Matthiessen, which focuses on his journeys through Gabon and other parts of West Africa

Gambia

Chaff on the Wind by Gambian author Ebou Dibba, which follows the fortunes of two rural boys who come to work in the city

Georgia

Please Don't Call It Soviet Georgia by Mary Russel, an entertaining travelogue describing the period of upheaval leading to independence

Germany

Goethe's Faust, which tells of the classic deal with the devil, and Nobel prize-winning author Günther Grass's novel The Tin Drum, which caused an uproar in Germany in the 1950s because of its depiction of the Nazis

Ghana

Asante: The Making of a Nation by Nana Otamakuro Adubofour provides an insight into Ashanti history and culture

Greece

Zorba the Greek by Nikos Kazantzakis – a tale about living life to the fullest by Greece's most celebrated contemporary author; Captain Corelli's Mandolin by Louis de Bernières – a captivating WW II-era love story set on Kefallonia

Greenland

The entertaining account of the country in Last Places – A Journey in the North, by Lawrence Millman

Grenada

Native Grenadian Jean Buffong's Under the Silk Cotton Tree: A Novel (Emerging Voices), a portrait of her Grenadian girlhood, religion and culture

Guadeloupe

Anabase by local poet Alexis Léger (translated by TS Eliot); The Tree of Life by Maryse Condé, centring around the life of a Guadeloupean family

Guam & Northern Marianas

Micronesia: Winds of Change, spanning the history from 1521 to 1951 with accounts of early explorers, missionaries and locals

Guatemala

Hombres De Maíz, by Miguel Ángel Asturias, the Nobel Prize-winning author and long-time exile who combines Mayan mysticism and social consciousness to deliver an indictment of dictatorial rule

Guinea

L'Enfant Noir by Guinean writer Camara Laye, full of fascinating insights into traditional daily life

Guinea-Bissau

Susan Lowerre's Under the Neem Tree, which tells a vivid story of a Peace Corps volunteer's experiences in the region

Guyana

The country's best known work of literature, ER Braithwaite's To Sir With Love; or Ninety-Two Days which Evelyn Waugh wheezed his way through Guyana's rugged interior to write

Haiti

Beast of the Haitian Hills by Pierre Marcelin and Philippe Thoby Marcelin, a novel about life in the Haitian countryside; the historical novel All Souls' Rising by Madison Smartt Bell

Honduras

El Gran Hotel by Guillermo Yuscarán (one of Honduras' most celebrated writers) or The Soccer War by Ryszard Kapuscinski, which is about the 100-hour war between Honduras and El Salvador known as the Guerra de Fútbol (the Football War)

Hong Kong

An Insular Possession by Timothy Mo – a novel set in pre-colonial Hong Kong; Fragrant Harbour by John Lanchester – set in the more recent past

Hungary

Fateless, by Imre Kertész, an autobiographical novel about the author's experiences in concentration camps in WWII; Eclipse of the Crescent Moon, by Géza Gárdonyi, a tale set in the 16th century during the Turkish siege

Iceland

Independent People by Halldór Laxness, one of half a dozen brilliant novels by the Nobel Prize winner, or the comic drama Angels of the Universe, by Einar Már Gudmundsson

India

Jawaharlal Nehru's Discovery of India, tales from the Vedic era to WWII, or V S Naipaul's India: A Million Mutinies Now, a Trinidadian's take on India's tribulations and triumphs

Indonesia

Pramoedya Ananta Toer's The Fugitive, by the leader of a failed nationalist revolt against Japanese occupation during WWII. Ayu Utami's Saman is a story of political repression, extramarital sex and religious intolerance.

Iran

Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith by Gina Nahai – magic realism set amongst the Jewish community of Tehran; Persian Pilgrimages by Afshin Molavi, an expat Iranian journalist who explores both history and current issues, by speaking to locals

Ireland

McCarthy's Bar, a terrifically funny account of the author's quest to explore his cultural heritage

Israel

The meditations of Israeli novelist, Amoz Oz, on his country and culture

Italy

Umberto Eco's masterful The Name of the Rose, a medieval whodunit with a difference. Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's The Leopard charts the demise of Sicilian royalty and rise of Italian nationhood

Jamaica

Jean Rhys' Wide Sargasso Sea, a sultry tale of post-emancipation Jamaica

Japan

Inside Japan by Peter Tasker, a fascinating foray into Japanese culture, society and the economy. Kitchen by Banana Yoshimoto is a hauntingly beautiful story set in contemporary Tokyo that shows a side of Japan not often seen.

Jordan

Seven Pillars of Wisdom by TE Lawrence – it's Lawrence of Arabia straight from the camel's mouth

Kazakhstan

The Silk Road: A History by Irene Frank and David Brownstone, a richly illustrated and mapped history of the legendary caravan routes

Kenya

Isak Dinesen's epic settler account, Out of Africa

Kiribati

Gavin Bell's In Search of Tusitala: Travels in the Pacific after Robert Louis Stevenson, which follows Robert Louis Stevenson through Kiribati

Korea, North

Read widely – there's not a lot of factual material in print or on the web, and people are rarely ambivalent about North Korea

Korea, South

Yi Sang's *Wings*, an allegory of adultery, colonialism and the absurdity of life; Rhee Won-Bok's *Korea Unmasked*, which details Korean history, culture and sociology

Kuwait

Thomas Friedman's *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, an excellent read for anyone wishing to more fully understand the causes and effects of the region's strife

Kyrgyzstan

Chinghiz Aitmatov's novel *Djamila*, which tells of Kyrgyz life and culture

Laos

Bamboo Palace by Christopher Kremmer – part travelogue, part mystery, it chronicles the lost dynasty of Laos

Latvia

Latvia's national epic, *Lacplesis (The Bear Slayer)*, written by Andrejs Pumpurs in the mid-19th century and based on traditional Latvian folk stories

Lebanon

William Dalrymple's *From the Holy Mountain*, a funny, thought-provoking account of the author's journey in the footsteps of a 6th-century monk

Lesotho

Stories By and About Women in Lesotho, edited by K Limakatso Kendall, containing tales told orally by Southern Sotho women and providing insights into women's thoughts and decision-making processes in Lesotho

Liberia

Liberia: Portrait of a Failed State by John-Peter Pham, a sensitive, factual account of African politics and Western intervention

Libya

Libyan-born and American-raised Khaled Mattawa's *Ismailia Eclipse*, poetry that speaks across both cultural and political borders

Liechtenstein

Secrets of the Seven Smallest States of Europe: Andorra, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, San Marino and Vatican City by Thomas Ecchardt, which outs Liechtenstein from its historical closet

Lithuania

Antanas Skema's semi-autobiographical novel *Balta drobule*, which pioneered the use of stream of consciousness in Lithuanian literature

Luxembourg

How to Remain What You Are, a humorous look at Luxembourg ways by George Müller, a local psychologist and writer

Macau

Austin Coates' *City of Broken Promises* – a fictionalised account of the life of 18th-century Macanese trader Martha Merop

Macedonia

Black Lamb and Grey Falcon by Rebecca West, a between-the-wars Balkan travelogue

Madagascar

Madagascar, Island of the Ancestors by John Mack, a superb ethnographic overview of Malagasy culture

Malawi

Malawian poet Steve Chimombo's highly acclaimed *The Rainmaker*, or Paul Theroux's *Jungle Lovers*, a light and humorous take on 1960s Malawi culture and politics

Malaysia

Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* – adventure on the South China Seas and the real-life story of Raja Brooke of Sarawak; *The Return* by KS Maniam – contemporary Malaysian fiction exploring the Indian Malaysian experience

Maldives

Mysticism in the Maldives, which documents Maldivian myths and stories

Mali

The Unveiling of Timbuctoo: The Astounding Adventures of Caillie by Gailbraith Welch, an account of the first Western explorer to both reach and return from Timbuktu

Malta

Francis Ebejer's *For Rozina... A Husband*, based on Maltese village life and comprising a collection of short stories; *The Kappilan of Malta* by Nicolas Monserrat tells of a priest's experiences during WWII

Marshall Islands

Man This Reef by Gerald Knight – translated legends of an elderly Marshallese storyteller

Martinique

The Collected Poetry of Aimé Césaire, the force behind the Black Pride phenomenon known as *négritude*; *Texaco* by Patrick Chamoiseau and *Malemort* by Edouard Glissant are also excellent reads

Mauritania

Michael Asher's recounting of the first west-to-east camel crossing of the Sahara in *Impossible Journey: Two Against the Sahara*

Mauritius

The romantic novel *Paul et Virginie* by Bernardin de St Pierre, or *Petrusmok* by well-known author Malcolm de Chazal

Mexico

Eyewitness accounts of the Spanish arrival in the 'new world' such as *History of the Conquest of New Spain* by Bernal Díaz del Castillo; *The Labyrinth of Solitude* by Octavio Paz is a poetic exploration of Mexican myths and identity

Micronesia, Federated States of

Islands Islands: A Special Good, by Bernadette V Wehrly – a collection of poems, songs and legends

Moldova

Tony Hawkes' travelogue *Playing the Moldovans at Tennis*, the product of an unlikely bet involving the Moldovan football team; for a deeper cultural perspective read Charles King's *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia and the Politics of Culture*

Monaco

Peter Mayle's *Anything Considered*, a novel about Monaco featuring monks, crime and truffles; *The Bridesmaids: Grace Kelly and six intimate friends*, in which Judith Balaban Quine persuades Grace's best buddies to spill the beans

Mongolia

The Secret History of the Mongols, recording the life and deeds of Genghis Khan

Morocco

Year of the Elephant by Leila Abouzeid, or Leonora Peet's *Women of Marrakesh*, in which Peet gets about as close as a non-Muslim can to the lives of local women

Mozambique

Dumba-Nengue – Histórias trágicas do Banditismo by politician, journalist and environmentalist Lina Magaia

Myanmar

Freedom from Fear & Other Writings – essays by and about Aung San Suu Kyi; George Orwell's Burmese Days – the classic novel of British colonialism; Paul Theroux's The Great Railway Bazaar – a funny account of the author's train trip through 1970s Burma

Namibia

Born of the Sun, the largely autobiographical first novel by local author Joseph Diescho

Nauru

Nauru: Phosphate and Political Progress by Nancy Viviani, an authoritative history of the mining that has crippled the island

Nepal

Tenzing and the Sherpas of Everest by Judy and Tashi Tenzing, a compelling tale about Nepal's national hero

Netherlands

The Diary of Anne Frank, a moving journal that describes her life in hiding in Nazi-occupied Amsterdam; The Fall by Albert Camus, an existential monologue that uses Amsterdam's canal system as an analogy for the rings of Hell

New Caledonia

Jean-Marie Tjibao's Kanaké – the Melanesian Way, an insight into Kanak culture featuring colour photographs, poems and legends

New Zealand

Witi Ihimaera's The Whale Rider – a moving insight into the spirituality, tradition, and culture of the Maori people

Nicaragua

Rubén Darío's Stories and Poems – masterpieces by the founder of Spanish modernism; Salman Rushdie's The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey – revealing personal experiences of a visit

Niger

In Sorcery's Shadow: A Memoir of Apprenticeship Among the Songhay of Niger by Paul Stoller – a very readable, often humorous, and detailed account of his fieldwork among the Songhay of Niger

Nigeria

Anything by Nobel Prize winner Wole Soyinka, internationally acclaimed writer Chinua Achebe or Ben Okri, a crowd-pulling favourite on the Western literary circuit

Norway

A Doll's House by quintessential Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen, or Jostein Gaarder's bestseller Sophie's World

Oman

Phillip Ward's Travels in Oman: On the track of the Early Explorer, a combination of modern travelogue and historical traveller accounts

Pakistan

Pakistan: The Eye of the Storm, by former BBC correspondent Owen Bennett-Jones; Salman Rushdie's Shame, whose characters are a metaphor for Pakistan

Palau

Arnold H Leibowitz's Embattled Island: Palau's Struggle for Independence, a US-friendly take on Palau's postwar political history

Palestine

Gaza: Legacy of an Occupation by Dick Doughty and Mohammed El-Aydi, which gives an emotive, gritty view of Palestinian life in the Strip. And of course, the Bible is an informative travelogue

Panama

When New Flowers Bloomed, a collection of stories by women writers from Panama and Costa Rica. Tekkin' a Waalk by Peter Ford includes a stroll along Panama's Caribbean coast.

Papua New Guinea

Biologist Tim Flannery's Throwim Way Leg, an account of his many field trips into the interior's remotest parts in search of tree-kangaroos

Paraguay

Augusto Roa Bastos' Son of Man, which ties together several episodes of Paraguayan history, or for travel literature try At the Tomb of the Inflatable Pig: Travels Through Paraguay by John Gimlette

Peru

The Bridge of San Luis Rey, by Thornton Wilder, an examination of 18th-century colonial Peru

Philippines

Great Philippine Jungle Energy Cafe, a magical novel by the multi-award-winning Alfred A Yuson, or Pico Iyer's bitter-sweet insights in the Philippines chapter of his travelogue Video Nights in Kathmandu

Pitcairn Islands

Fragile Paradise by Glynn Christian (Fletcher's great-great-great-great-grandson), an investigation of the mutiny and the mutineers' fate on Pitcairn

Poland

The Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland by Norman Davies, a readable, fascinating insight into the development of the nation

Portugal

Fernando Pessoa & Co: Selected Poems by Fernando Pessoa, a collection of work by Portugal's greatest poet. Nobel Prize winner José Saramago's O Evangelho segundo Jesus Cristo (The Gospel According to Jesus Christ) is a unique reinterpretation of the biblical gospels.

Puerto Rico

Rosario Ferre's revisionist stories in Sweet Diamond Dust. Christina Duffy Burnett's Foreign in a Domestic Sense is an examination of American imperialism.

Qatar

Arabian Time Machine: Self-Portrait of an Oil State by Helga Graham, a collection of interviews with Qataris about their lives, culture and traditions

Réunion

Catherine Lavaux's La Réunion: Du Battant des Lames au Sommet des Montagnes

Romania

Norman Manea's The Hooligan's Return: A Memoir, relating the return of this accomplished author to his homeland in the late 1990s

Russian Federation

Tolstoy's War and Peace, if you're feeling brave; otherwise have a go at Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment

Rwanda

We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families by Phillip Gourevitch, a brilliant account of the killings and how the international community failed Rwanda in 1994 and beyond

Saint Kitts & Nevis

Historic Basseterre: The Story of its Growth by Sir Probyn Inniss recounts the growth of the capital. Read Sir Fred Phillips' memoirs Caribbean Life and Culture: A Citizen Reflects for a more personal account.

Saint Lucia

Derek Walcott's Collected Poems, 1948-1984, an anthology by St Lucia's favourite son and Nobel prize winner

Saint Vincent & the Grenadines

The history of St Vincent's Black Caribs in Wild Majesty: Encounters with Caribs from Columbus to the Present Day by Peter Hulme and Neil Whitehead

Samoa

Where We Once Belonged by Sia Figiel, a local author's first novel about dispossession in modern Samoa

San Marino

Secrets of the Seven Smallest States of Europe: Andorra, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, San Marino and Vatican City by Thomas Ecchardt

São Tomé & Príncipe

Former Portuguese Colonies by Herb Boyd, which includes an historical overview of São Tomé and Príncipe

Saudi Arabia

Sandstorms, Days and Nights in Arabia, Peter Theroux's memoir of the Middle East, or the delightful coffee-table book The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Scotland

Anything by Robert Burns, or Trainspotting by Irvine Welsh, for an incomparable but often incomprehensible insight into Scotland

Senegal

God's Bits of Wood by Senegalese writer Sembene Ousmane, the story of adversity faced by strikers on the Dakar-Niger train line in the 1940s

Serbia & Montenegro

Tim Judah's The Serbs: History, Myth and the Destruction of Yugoslavia, a comprehensive and thoroughly readable account of Serbia's part in Yugoslavia's demise. Ivo Andric's novel Bridge on the Drina foresaw the region's disasters of the 1990s

Seychelles

Aldabra Alone by Tony Beamish, which looks at life among the giant tortoises during an expedition to the Aldabra group

Sierra Leone

Blood Diamonds: Tracing the Deadly Path of the World's Most Precious Stones by Greg Campbell

Singapore

Foreign Bodies and Mammon Inc by Hwee Hwee Tan – two modern morality tales about Singaporean youth. Suchen Christine Lim's Fistful of Colours captures the tensions between modern and traditional Singapore

Slovakia

The brilliant village tales of Bozena Slancikova and the poetry of Ivan Krasko

Slovenia

Questions about Slovenia by Matja_ Chvatal – this explains the differences between Slovenia, Slovakia and Slavonia, describes what kolone (pig-slaughters) are, and pinpoints the things that make Slovenes laugh.

Solomon Islands

Ples Bilong lumi – The Solomon Islands, the Past Four Thousand Years by Sam Alasia et al. Lightning Meets the West Wind – The Malaita Massacre by Keesing & Corris relates the story of a district officer's killing by Kaiwo tribesmen in 1927.

Somalia

Aman: The Story of a Somali Girl by Janice Boddy and Virginia Lee Barnes, a first-person account of the story of a Somalian girl's life

South Africa

Nelson Mandela's autobiography, Long Walk to Freedom. A truly compelling book, and a compulsory read of the epic life story of the man who won freedom for his people

Spain

The 17th-century novel Don Quijote de la Mancha by Miguel de Cervantes, or For Whom the Bell Tolls, a terse tale of civil war by Ernest Hemingway

Sri Lanka

Michael Ondaatje's Running in the Family, a humorous account of returning to Sri Lanka after growing up there in the 1940s and '50s

Sudan

Tayeb Salih's Season of Migration to the North, a compelling tale of a Sudanese man torn between the West and his homeland; or Emma's War by Deborah Scroggins, the true and moving story of a British aid-worker who married a Sudanese warlord

Suriname

Tales of a Shaman's Apprentice by Mark Plotkin, or Suriname: Politics, Economics & Society by Henk E Chin and Hans Buddingh

Swaziland

The Kingdom of Swaziland by D Hugh Gillis, a history of the kingdom

Sweden

Charlotte Rosen Svensson's Culture shock! Sweden: A Guide to Customs and Etiquette for an accurate guide to Swedish cultural behaviour

Switzerland

Johanna Spyri's Heidi – the classic children's story of an orphan girl living in the Swiss Alps, and Anita Brookner's Hotel du Lac – a novel centred on a group of out-of-season hotel guests around Lake Geneva

Syria

Agatha Christie's Come Tell Me How You Live – a light-hearted picture of archaeology and life in the desert in the mid-20th century

Tahiti & French Polynesia

The Marriage of Loti, by Pierre Loti, a romance that reinforced the romantic myth of Tahiti.

Taiwan

Harmony in Conflict by Richard Hartzell, an often-recommended primer for Westerners thinking about living in Taiwan

Tajikistan

Works by Tajikistan's most popular living writer, Taimur Zulfikarov, or Kim by Rudyard Kipling – the story of the Raj during the 19th-century cold war between Russia and Britain in which the region became embroiled

Tanzania

Emily Said-Ruete's Memoirs of an Arabian Princess – an autobiographical glimpse into the life of a Zanzibari princess who eloped to Europe

Thailand

Chart Kobjitti's Pan Ma Ba (Mad Dog & Co) – an account of Thailand's farang (foreigner) scene. Stir-fry up a storm with David Thompson's sumptuous Thai Food.

Tibet

Mary Craig's *Tears of Blood: A Cry for Tibet*, a riveting account of Tibet since the Chinese takeover; or Heinrich Harrer's *Seven Years in Tibet*, an engaging account of Harrer's sojourn in Tibet during the mid-20th century

Togo

the autobiography *An African in Greenland* by Tété-Michel Kpomassie, who was raised in a traditional Togolese family

Tonga

Tonga Islands: *William Mariner's Account* by Dr John Martin, published in 1817 and still one of the best books on pre-Christian Tonga

Trinidad & Tobago

A House for Mr Biswas by VS Naipaul – dig deep into the country's multi-ethnic culture by reading this vivid portrait of life as an East Indian in Trinidad

Tunisia

Mustapha Tlili's novel *Lion Mountain, or Pillar of Salt* by Albert Memmi

Turkey

Irfan Orga's *Portrait of a Turkish Family*, which tells of a family struggling to survive the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the birth of the Turkish Republic

Turkmenistan

Works by Turkmen poet Magtymguly Feraghy. *Sacred Horses: The Life of a Turkmen Cowboy* by Jonathon Maslow is a good, if abrasive, account of this naturalist's visits to the Karakum desert

Turks & Caicos

J Dennis Harris's *A Summer on the Borders of the Caribbean Sea*, a classic 19th-century travelogue. *Water and Light* by Stephen Harrigan is a splendid memoir by a Texan about diving off Grand Turk.

Tuvalu

The People's Lawyer by Philip Ells – an amusing and insightful account of a young Voluntary Service Overseas lawyer's spell in Tuvalu, or *The Happy Isles of Oceania – Paddling the Pacific*, by the notorious Paul Theroux

Uganda

The Last King of Scotland by Giles Foden, a page-turner chronicling the experience of Idi Amin's personal doctor-turned-confidant; or *The Abyssinian Chronicles* by Ugandan Moses Isegawa, a coming of age story of a boy and of a country during Idi Amin's dark reign and its chaotic aftermath

Ukraine

Everything Is Illuminated by Jonathan Safran Foer which recounts this American author's journey to find his family in the Ukraine

United Arab Emirates

Arabic Short Stories, translated by Denys Johnson-Davies, an excellent primer with tales from all over the Middle East

United States of America

Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, the classic Beat Generation paean to restless roadtripping; Don DeLillo's *Underworld*, an ambitious and broad-ranging novel of the Cold War and American culture

Uruguay

Juan Carlos Onetti's *Tierra de Nadie (No Man's Land)*

Uzbekistan

Tom Bissell's *Chasing the Sea* – a journey to the Aral Sea and an insightful look at modern Uzbekistan, or *The Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyam* – penned by a one-time resident of Samarkand

Vanuatu

Jeremy McClancy's *To Kill a Bird with Two Stones* – an exceptional history of Vanuatu right up to its independence in 1980

Vatican City

Robert J Hutchinson's *When in Rome: A Journal of Life in Vatican City* for an in-depth look at Vatican nitty gritty. Thomas J Reese's *Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church*; *The Sistine Chapel* by Fabrizio Mancinelli is an illustrated guide charting the history of the chapel's great artworks.

Venezuela

Doña Bárbara by internationally renowned author Rómulo Gallegos

Vietnam

The Sorrow of War by Vietnamese writer Bao Ninh. Flogged on every street corner of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, this cynical take on the Vietnam War won a literature prize in Vietnam in 1993.

Virgin Islands

Martha Gellhorn's *Travels with Myself and Another*, observing the changes between her two visits in 1942 and 1977 to the British Virgin Islands

Wales

Dannie Abse's *Journals from the Antheap*, a humorous account of his trips through Wales or the novel *Work, Sex and Rugby* by Lewis Davies

Yemen

Tim Mackintosh-Smith's *Yemen, Travels in Dictionary Land* – wry observations of Yemeni life from a long-time San'a resident

Zambia

The collection of home-grown short stories in *A Point of No Return* by Fawanyanga Mulikita or writer-politician Dominic Mulaisho's *The Tongue of the Dumb* and *The Smoke That Thunders*

Zimbabwe

Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*, a critique of race relations in Rhodesia