

World Traveling

Dennis May, Patron Services, Kirkland Town Library

This past week, for the first time in my life, I hopped on a plane and flew across the Atlantic to explore my first European country: Portugal. If you know anything about me it is that I have never been the biggest fan of travel. The months-long planning process that involves finding plane tickets, places to stay, things to do, and places of interest has been such an overwhelming task that the thought of going somewhere lost its excitement. Ironically, Brenna, my wife, is a world traveler who has been to Europe, Asia, and Africa (soon to add South America to that list), and she loves all of the aspects of travel that I dread. So, naturally, when it came to planning for my first ever international trip, she didn't help at all. She helped me book my flights, but she left me to do the rest. This seemed fair (after all, it was my trip and she wasn't going to come along) but another key aspect of my personality is my "go-with-the-flow" attitude.

My advance planning left something to be desired, and I left for Portugal with a very loose idea of the next seven days. But after walking five to seven miles each day for a week looking for things to do, I can honestly say I had the best time of my life. I was able to walk through ancient castles like Castelo do Sao Jorge, gawk in awe at the beauty of some of the oldest churches in the world, take a riverboat tour along Lisbon's coast, dance on the famous Pink Street, eat my weight in seafood, and sip on port directly from the source. I even visited the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, the largest library in the country. My trip was unbelievable. At first I didn't get the hype of travel, but now I know why people get romantic about it.

There are countless books about traveling the globe, ranging from romance novels to travel guides, travel memoirs to harrowing tales of survivalists. Each author in this genre provides their own perspective on places they have explored. Two writers that dominate this field, and who beautifully capture what it's like to travel the world, are Bill Bryson and the late Anthony Bourdain.

Are you curious about Australia, but can't get past the thought about being surrounded by deadly animals? Then you should check out Bryson's *In a Sunburned Country* (2000). The writer's tale of his adventures down under is still as timely and witty as it was when it was first published 20 years ago. Bryson walks the hilarious (and very Australian) line between love for the country and a healthy dose of fear with the dexterity of a tightrope performer. If you love this travel tale, check out Bryson's other adventures in *A Walk in the Woods*, *The Road to Little Dribbling*, and many others.

Anthony Bourdain's *World Travel: An Irreverent Guide* (2021) is a comprehensive look at his travels to cities around the globe. He begins in New York City then takes his readers to Borneo, Shanghai, Paris, Buenos Aires, and then Tanzania. Bourdain offers advice about how to get somewhere, what to eat, and where to stay. Supplementing his writing are essays from the people who knew him the best as well as those who joined him on his travels. The book offers heartwarming, witty, and curious tales about his journeys while honoring Bourdain's life and the impact he had on the world. Along with this book, you should look for his cookbooks, documentaries, and interviews.

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While I have no delusions of grandeur about my ability to emulate Bryson or Bourdain, their books offer an idea of what my life would be like if I had their patience and curiosity. Maybe I would be more well-traveled at this point in my life if I had started earlier. There are several places on my bucket list, including Australia, England, Spain, and China. My dream is to see the cherry blossoms bloom in Japan, drink from a boot in Germany, and walk through the castles of Scotland. I have plans to make these dreams become reality, so I'll take inspiration from the writings of Bourdain, Bryson, and the many other well-traveled authors on the shelves of the Kirkland Town Library. I'll also consider my trip to Portugal to be a great first step of many to come in my travel journey.