

Books

# 10 Travel Books to Feed Your Wanderlust

By

Rebecca Shapiro

|

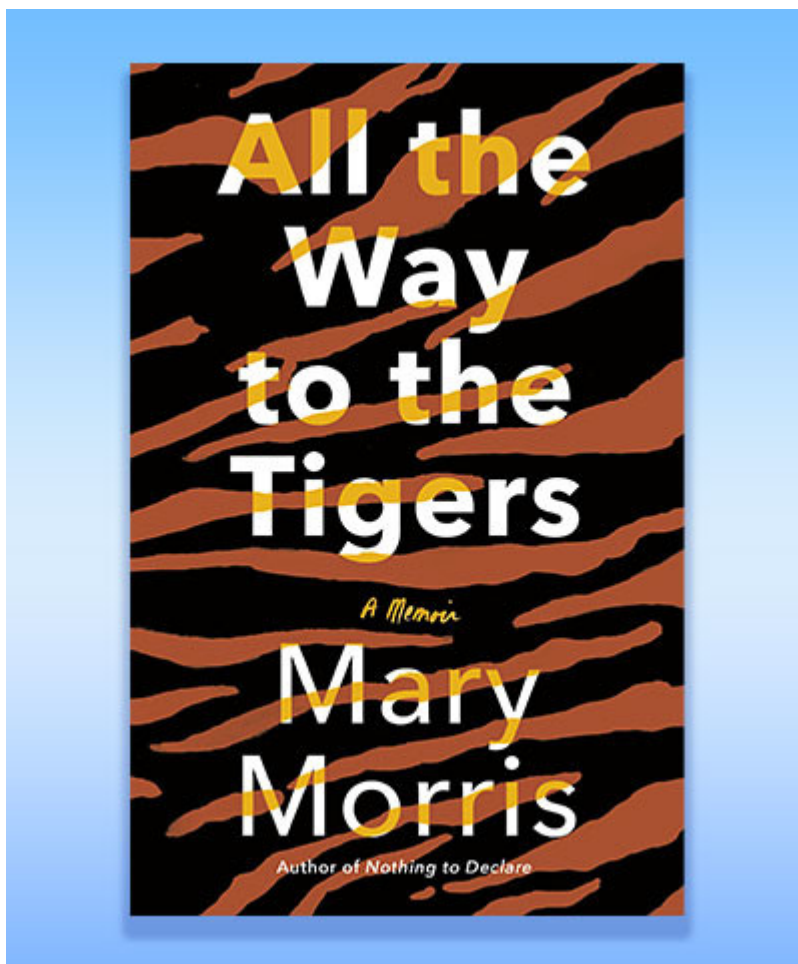
Jun. 15, 2022



Patiwat Sariya / Shutterstock

**Whether you're planning** an epic adventure or settling in for some armchair travel, these ten books, all by globetrotting Columbia alumni, will inspire you to see the world in new ways.

---



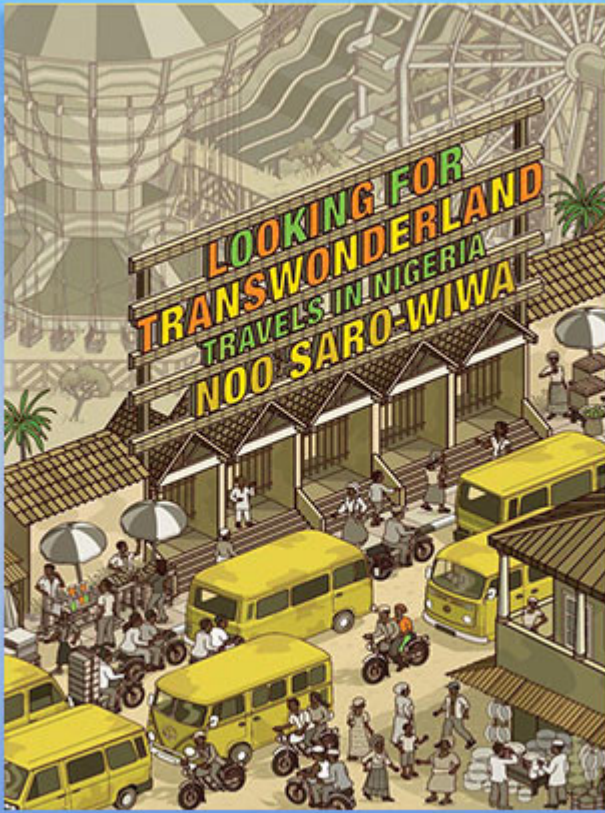
Anchor

***All the Way to the Tigers: A Memoir***

**By Mary Morris '77GSAS (2020)**

When travel writer and novelist Mary Morris was badly injured in an ice-skating accident, she feared that her life of adventure was over. But a quote from Thomas Mann convinced her otherwise: “He would go on a journey. Not far. Not all the way to the tigers.” Thus began Morris’s three-year-quest — which does take her far, from Brooklyn to the jungles of India — to find a tiger in the wild. Like her much-lauded memoir *Nothing to Declare*, Morris’s [latest book](#) is a thoughtful, spiritual, genre-bending journey.

---



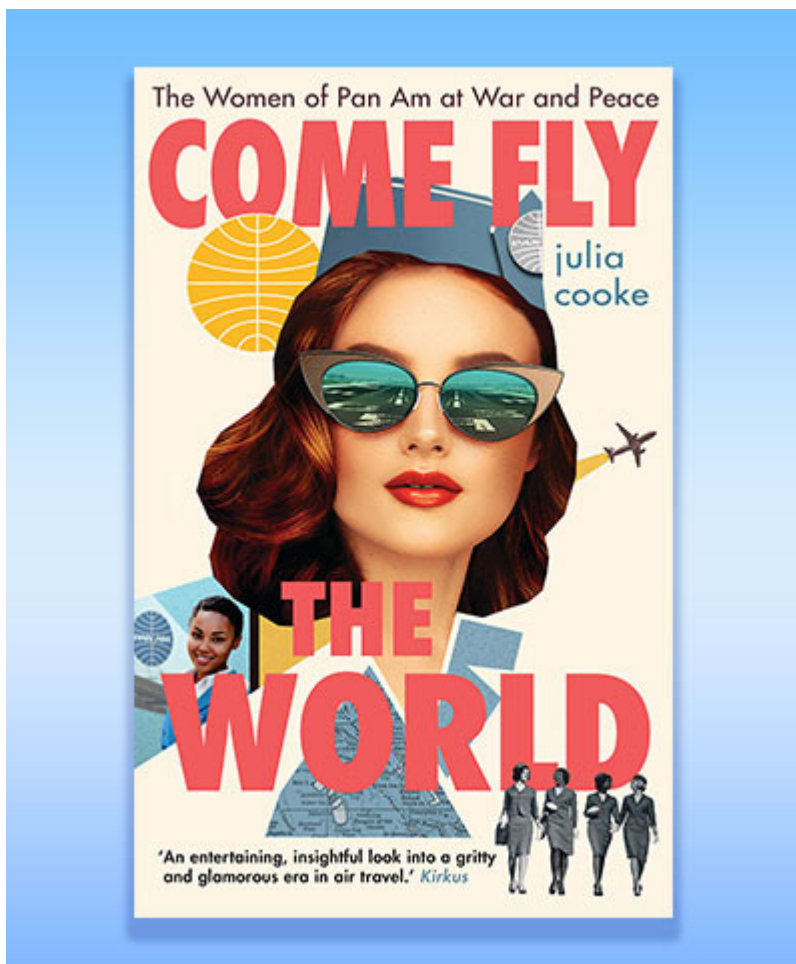
Soft Skull Press

***Looking for Transwonderland: Travels in Nigeria***

**By Noo Saro-Wiwa '01JRN (2012)**

Noo Saro-Wiwa spent her childhood in the United Kingdom, traveling back to her native Nigeria only on summer vacations. But when she was nineteen, her father, a journalist and activist, was killed by Nigerian police. Saro-Wiwa returned to her homeland to reckon with her father's legacy and try to understand the history of the nation that killed him. Part [memoir](#), part family history, and part travelogue, it's an intriguing (and surprisingly funny) [look](#) at a very complicated country.

---



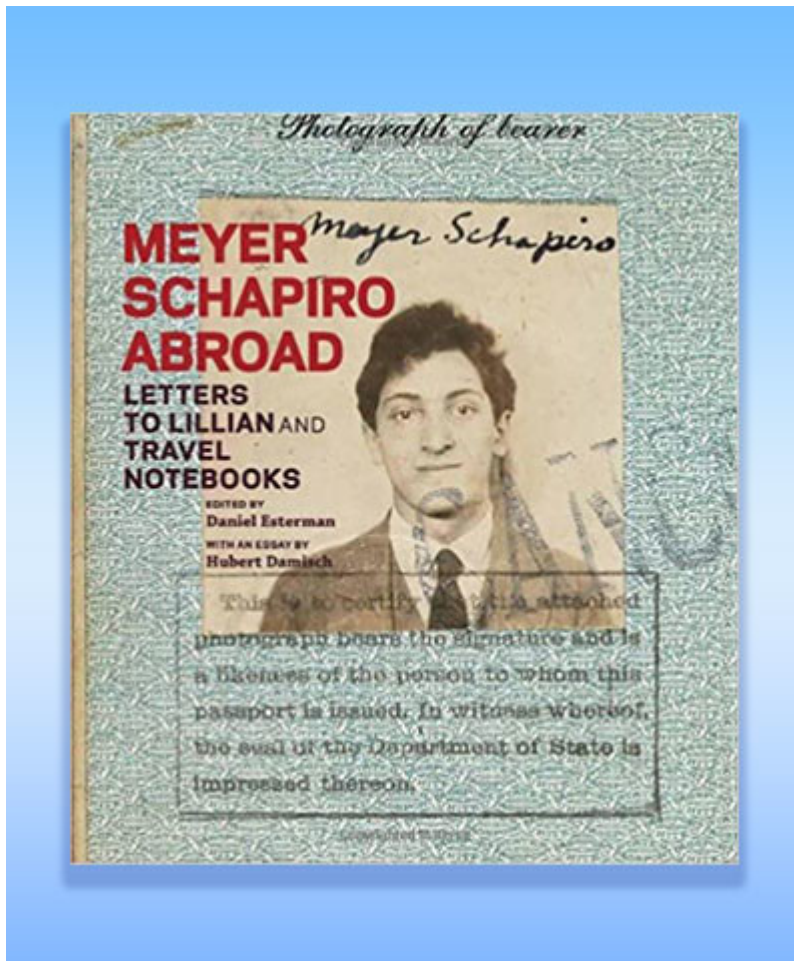
Mariner Books

***Come Fly the World: The Jet-Age Story of the Women of Pan Am***

**By Julia Cooke '13SOA (2021)**

There's nothing glamorous about flying these days, so it's extra fun to tag along with Julia Cooke back to the 1960s, the golden age of air travel, when working as a Pan Am stewardess was peak cool. Cooke tells five such women's [stories](#), which run the gamut from the enviable (shopping sprees in Paris and beach holidays in the Philippines) to the unbelievable (evading the KGB in Moscow and smuggling a newsreel out of war-torn Pakistan).

---



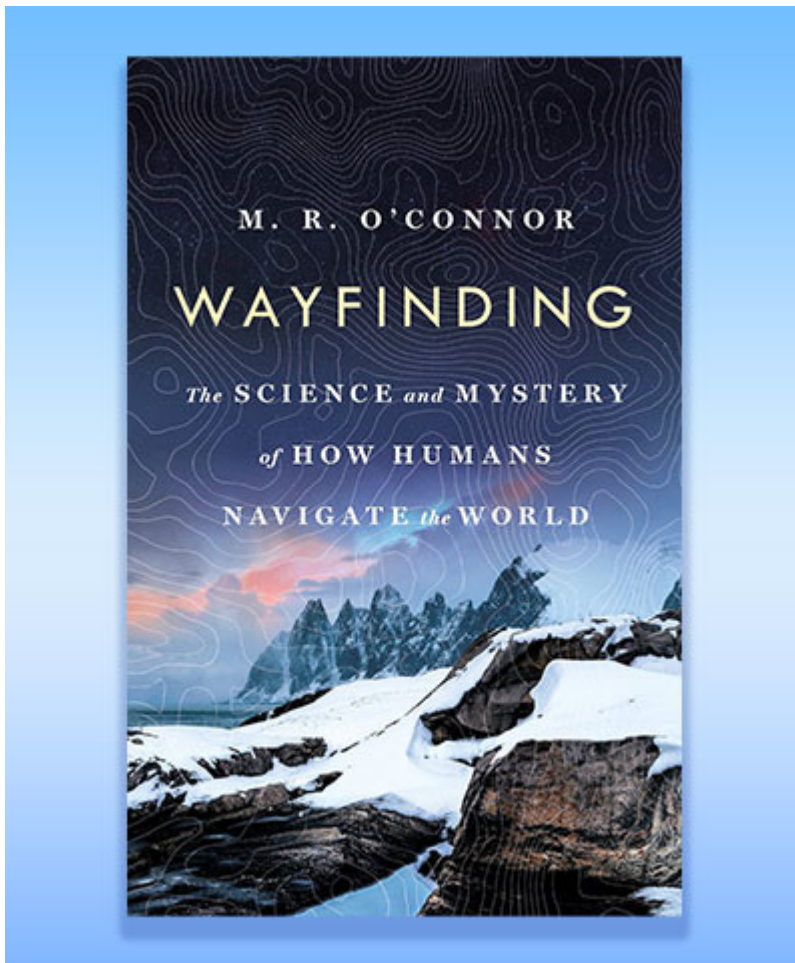
Getty Research Institute

***Meyer Schapiro Abroad: Letters to Lillian and Travel Notebooks***

**By Meyer Schapiro '24CC, '35GSAS, edited by Daniel Esterman '65CC (2009)**

Meyer Schapiro is known as one of the twentieth century's most accomplished art historians. But in 1926 and 1927, he was still a Columbia graduate student, studying abroad in Europe and the Middle East. The [letters](#) that he wrote to his then fiancée, Lillian, as well as the notebooks that he kept, are ripe with budding observations on art and politics and represent a fascinating time capsule of intellectual life nearly a century ago.

---



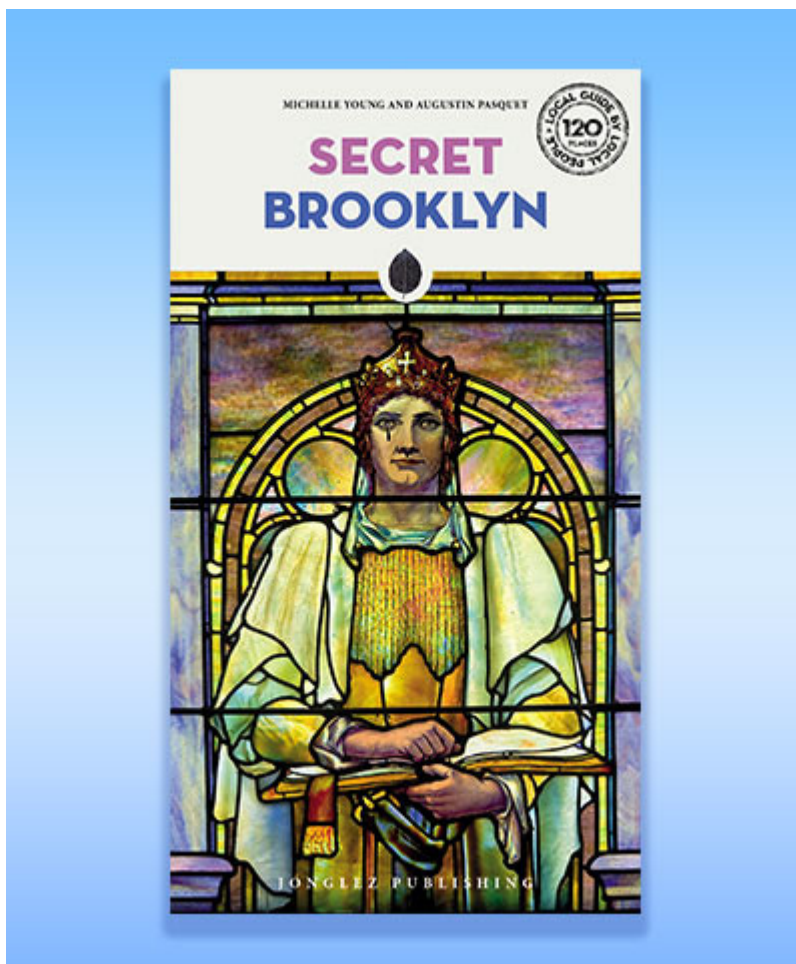
St. Martin's Press

***Wayfinding: The Science and Mystery of How Humans Navigate the World***

**By M. R. O'Connor '08JRN (2019)**

Technology has made wayfinding — “the use and organization of sensory information from the environment to guide us” — almost obsolete. But before GPS, or even written maps, humans purposefully traveled great distances across the earth. Journalist M. R. O'Connor draws on disciplines from neuroscience to anthropology to explore how they did it. Her [findings](#) are fascinating, and so is her journey to reach them, which takes her to the Arctic tundra, the Australian outback, and the islands of the South Pacific.

---



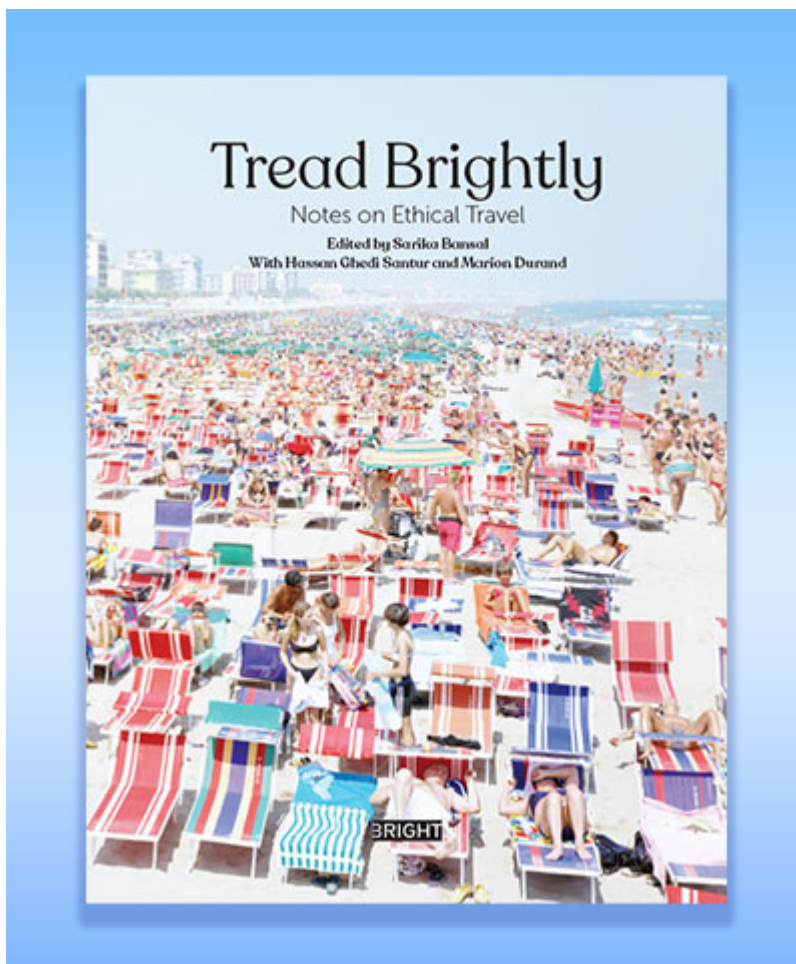
Jonglez Publishing

***Secret Brooklyn: An Unusual Guide***

**By Michelle Young '12GSAPP and Augustin Pasquet (2019)**

Michelle Young, an adjunct professor of architecture at Columbia, is the founder of [Untapped New York](#), a website dedicated to the secret corners and hidden gems of America's biggest city. So it's no surprise that her guide to Brooklyn is equally full of treasures — things like the world's oldest subway tunnel and a museum built into the hallway of a Williamsburg apartment building. It's an indispensable [resource](#) for visitors and residents alike.

---



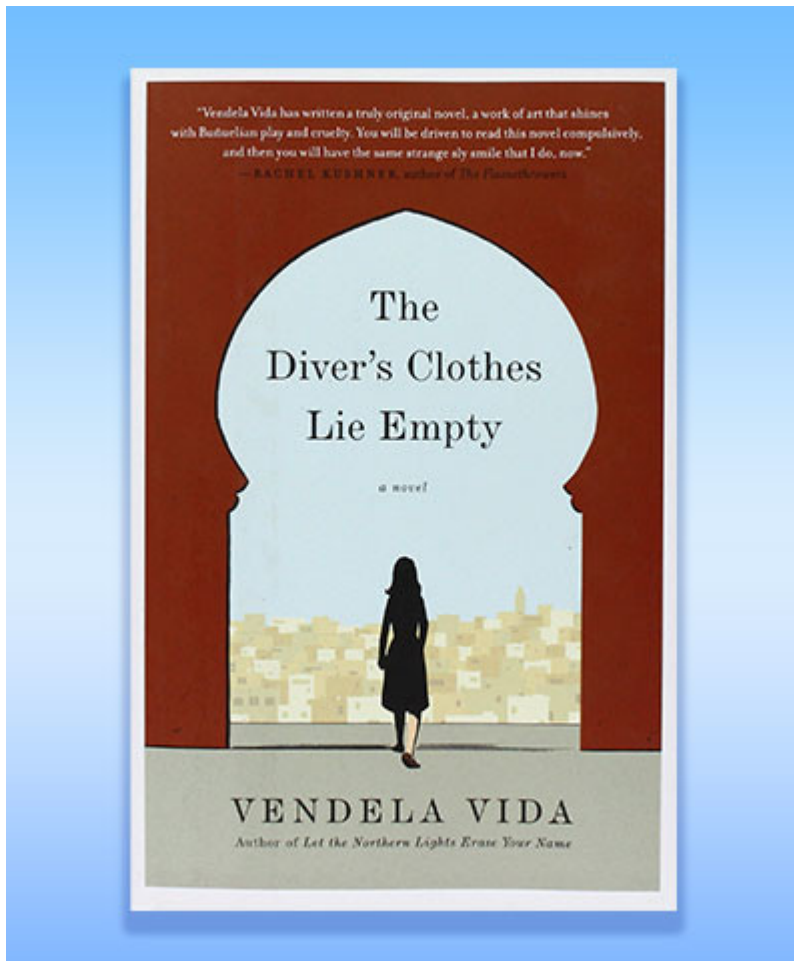
Sarika Bansal

***Tread Brightly: Notes on Ethical Travel***

**Edited by Sarika Bansal '12SIPA (2021)**

Editor Sarika Bansal is a true citizen of the world: she has lived on five continents, speaks four languages, and has traveled extensively. So she's more than qualified to ask tough questions and offer wisdom about how to travel ethically. The essays and photos in her [collection](#) tackle topics like the ecological implications of cruise ships, the ways that study-abroad programs and “orphanage tourism” impact communities, and the role that privilege plays in exploration. It's a timely wake-up call, with plenty of thoughtful ideas for the future.

---



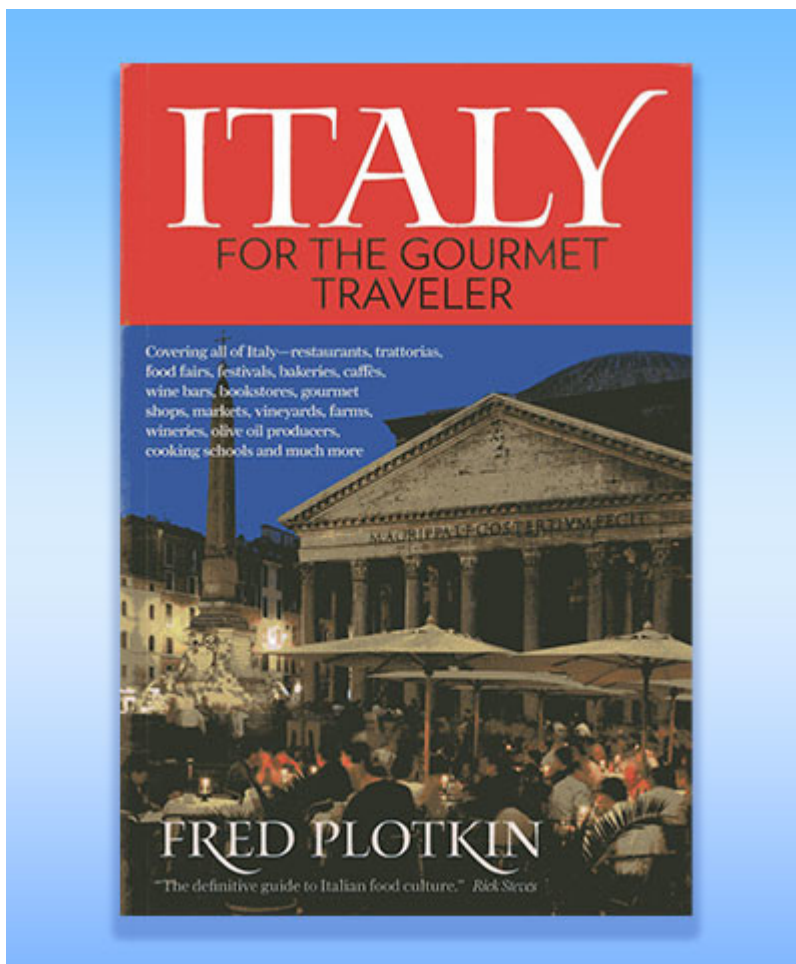
Ecco

### ***The Diver's Clothes Lie Empty***

#### **By Vendela Vida '96SOA (2015)**

One of the most alluring elements of travel is self-reinvention, an idea central to Vendela Vida's captivating, mind-bending [thriller](#). Upon arriving at her hotel in Casablanca, Vida's heroine is robbed of her passport and all her belongings. Strangely liberated by the crime that stripped her of her identity, she starts posing as a famous film star, which takes her on a series of mysterious adventures. Vida's writing is full of fun twists, and any armchair traveler will delight in her portrait of the sunbaked Moroccan city.

---



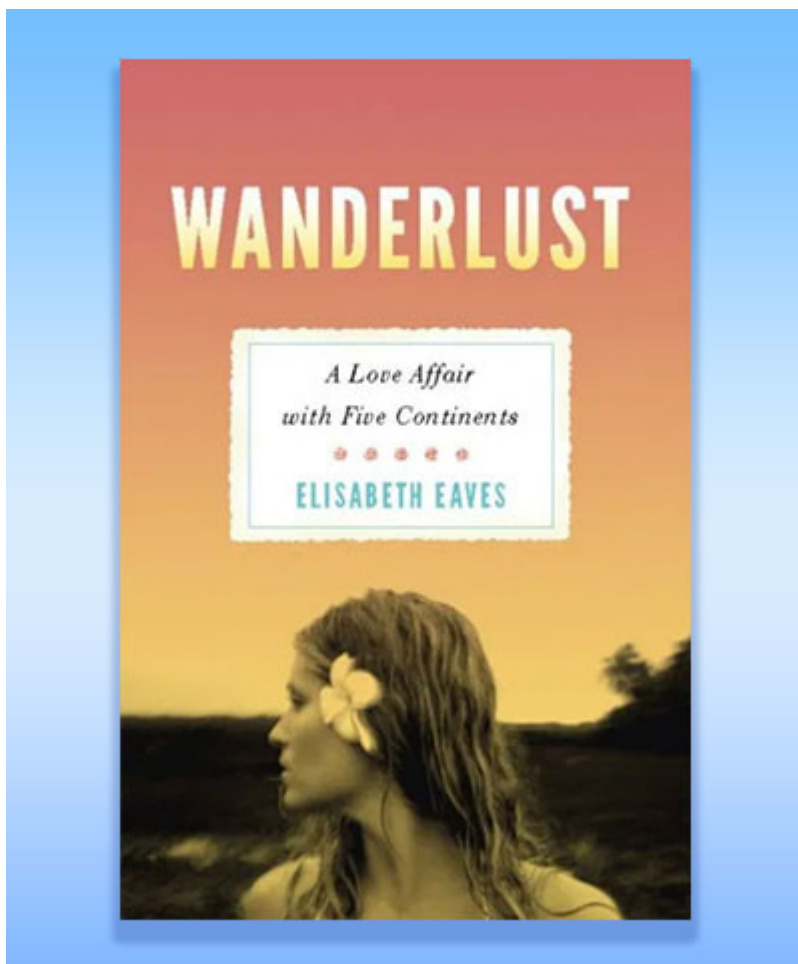
Kyle Books

### ***Italy for the Gourmet Traveler***

#### **By Fred Plotkin '80JRN (2014)**

There are plenty of good reasons to travel to Italy, but for most people the food is high on the list. And Fred Plotkin — an expert on Italian [opera](#) and cuisine — is the consummate guide. He has [tips](#) on the best restaurants, gelato stands, markets, wineries, and olive-oil distilleries, from the bustling centers of Rome and Milan to tiny villages off most tourist-trodden paths. Plotkin is working with travel-guide guru Rick Steves on a new gastronomic guide to Italy, out in 2023. Until then, this fifth edition remains an excellent resource.

---



Seal Press

***Wanderlust: A Love Affair with Five Continents***

**By Elisabeth Eaves '99SIPA (2011)**

Elisabeth Eaves lives by the notion that you can “go off into the world and let it carry you along.” Her [memoir](#) chronicles fifteen years of truly globe-spanning travel — from the busy streets of Cairo to the jungles of Papua New Guinea. Almost every new place comes with a romance, but Eaves is clearly reluctant to settle down with any of the men she meets. It’s a journey that will speak to anyone who craves the unknown and fears the mundane.

Read more from [Rebecca Shapiro](#)



[Guide to school abbreviations](#)

# TAKE THE COLUMBIA ALL-ALUMNI SURVEY

Complete the survey  
by June 5.

50 randomly selected  
survey participants  
will receive a  
Columbia sweatshirt!

Shape the alumni  
experience.

[alumni.columbia.edu/survey2026](https://alumni.columbia.edu/survey2026)

 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

All categories >

Read more from **Rebecca Shapiro**