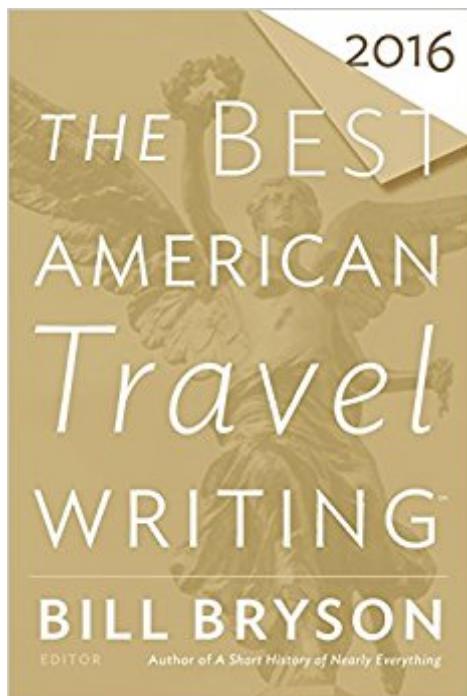


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The Best American Travel Writing 2016 (The Best American Series ®)



Synopsis

Why do I travel? Why does anyone of us travel? Bill Bryson poses these questions in his introduction to *The Best American Travel Writing 2016*, and though he admits, “I wasn’t at all sure I knew the answer,” they are questions worthy of examination. While the various contributors to this collection all travel for different reasons, one thing is for certain: “they come back with stories. Whether traversing the Arctic by dogsled, attending a surreal film festival in North Korea, or strolling the streets of a fast-changing Havana, their insights into the world and the human condition are illuminating and enthralling, providing an answer: This is why I like to travel. *The Best American Travel Writing 2016* includes Michael Chabon, Alice Gregory, Paul Theroux, Dave Eggers, Helen Macdonald, Sara Corbett, Stephanie Pearson, Thomas Chatterton Williams, Pico Iyer, and others.

BILL BRYSON, guest editor, is the best-selling author of *A Walk in the Woods*; *A Short History of Nearly Everything*; *One Summer: America, 1927*; *The Road to Little Dribbling*; and numerous other books. **JASON WILSON**, series editor, is the author of *Boozehound: On the Trail of the Rare, the Obscure, and the Overrated in Spirits*; *Spaghetti on the Wall*; and the forthcoming *Why Wine Matters*. He has written for the *Washington Post Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, and many other publications, and has won awards for Best Food Column from the Association of Food Journalists four times.

Book Information

Series: The Best American Series ®

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: Mariner Books (October 4, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0544812093

ISBN-13: 978-0544812093

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.8 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 39 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #23,452 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #35 in Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Writing > Travel #74 in Books > Travel > Travel Writing #4809 in Books > Literature & Fiction > United States

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The Best American Series Why do I travel? Why does anyone of us travel? Bill Bryson poses these

questions in his introduction to *The Best American Travel Writing 2016*, and though he admits, I wasn't at all sure I knew the answer, they are questions worthy of examination. While the various contributors to this collection all travel for different reasons, one thing is for certain they come back with stories. Whether traversing the Arctic by dogsled, attending a surreal film festival in North Korea, or strolling the streets of a fast-changing Havana, their insights into the world and the human condition are illuminating and enthralling, providing an answer: This is why I like to travel. *The Best American Travel Writing 2016* includes Michael Chabon, Alice Gregory, Paul Theroux, Dave Eggers, Helen Macdonald, Sara Corbett, Stephanie Pearson Thomas, Chatterton Williams, Pico Iyer, and others. **BILL BRYSON**, guest editor, is the best-selling author of *A Walk in the Woods*; *A Short History of Nearly Everything*; *One Summer: America, 1927*; *The Road to Little Dribbling*; and numerous other books. **JASON WILSON**, series editor, is the author of *Boozehound: On the Trail of the Rare, the Obscure, and the Overrated in Spirits*; *Spaghetti on the Wall*; and the forthcoming *Why Wine Matters*. He has written for the *Washington Post Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, and many other publications, and has won awards for Best Food Column from the Association of Food Journalists four times. "

BILL BRYSON is the best-selling author of *A Walk in the Woods*, *A Short History of Nearly Everything* and numerous other books. **Jason Wilson** is the author of *Boozehound: On the Trail of the Rare, the Obscure, and the Overrated in Spirits*. His next book, *Godforsaken Grapes*, will be published by Abrams Press in spring 2018. Wilson has been the series editor of *The Best American Travel Writing* since its inception in 2000.Â

I've been reading and collecting BATW volumes since 2000, and for years it has been one of the highlights of my yearly reading list. But for the third year in a row the collection disappoints to the point of being irritating. Either the genre is in steep decline or series editor Jason Wilson has run his course and needs to move on to new endeavors, giving someone else a chance to breath new life into the series. Until the publisher makes a change I doubt I'll be buying or reading future editions.

This latest entry in the *Best American Travel Writing* series includes more heavy, issue-based stories than its predecessors, covering topics like climate change, the status of indigenous people, and nuclear radiation. It also has some slow spots; unfortunately many of the longest stories are not the best. There are some great highlights though, including Pico Iyer's exploration of foreignness, Sara Corbett's exploration into the mysteries of Japanese culture and Michael Chabon's story of

being happily lost in Morocco. Patrick Symmes' gentle condemnation of travelers who want to see Cuba "before it changes" was a revelation, and Patricia Marx's essay on plastic surgery provided fascinating insight into Korea. The short foreword by Jason Wilson and Introduction by Bill Bryson are also entertaining.

Not actually "travel writing." It would be more accurately titled "Research Writing with Foreign Theme." Bill Bryson's intro was the only true travel writing in the book, and the best written part. The rest were explorations of smuggling, plastic surgery, other topics that happened to be centered in other countries. Precious little about traveling. Interesting. But misleading.

Bryson did not write this book, he edited it. Bryson is one of the best writers and has superb books, all of which I have read. Though written by others, it is a good read.

I like most of what I've read written by Bill Bryson and now I can say I like what he's overseen as editor. Nice variety of essays, all well-written, none self-conscious. None stands out as exemplary of the best travel writing but I didn't regret reading any.

Loving it so far- each chapter is like a miniature story (perhaps obviously, as it's a compilation of many different articles) but it's so easy to get invested in each piece and Bryson has done a great job picking them out and gathering them together.

I read this compilation every year and it never disappoints.

This is an uneven collection. Odd that Bryson put his name on it, because not much reflects the quality or wit in his writing. Some pieces are good, thoughtful, but most are sleep inducers.

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