



The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy **Douglas Adams (1952 – 2001)**

The Hitchhikers Guide started as a BBC radio series in 1978. The first of the five novels was published in 1979 and there has also been a TV series and a 2005 feature film.

Seconds before the Earth is demolished to make way for a hyperspace bypass, Arthur Dent is plucked off the planet by his friend Ford Prefect, a researcher for the revised edition of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. For the last fifteen years, the alien Prefect has been posing as an out-of-work actor on earth.



Together the pair begin a journey through space aided by quotes from *The Hitchhiker's Guide* - "A towel is about the most massively useful thing an interstellar hitchhiker can have" - and a galaxy full of fellow travellers: Zaphod Beeblebrox--the two-headed, three-armed ex-hippie and totally out-to-lunch president of the galaxy; Marvin, a paranoid, brilliant, and chronically depressed robot; Veet Voojagig, a student obsessed with the disappearance of all the ballpoint pens he bought over the years; Slartibartfast, the planetary architect. And many more...

What the critics say:

'It's science fiction and it's extremely funny...inspired lunacy that leaves hardly a science fiction cliché alive' Washington Post

*'To read *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* is to step into the garden shed of a maverick genius while he's out, to discover what ideas he has left lying around. But it is also as though [Douglas Adams](#) is speaking to you personally, gently, as he guides you through a perplexing world, assuring you 'Don't panic'.* Secret Scribbler, Guardian

What do you think? Did you enjoy it? Did it make you laugh?

The book has been described as a satire on government, politics, and big business, as well as a kind of philosophical investigation.

Do you think ideas like these make *Hitchhikers Guide* more interesting or do they ruin the book as a comic romp?

UFOs

One of things the book plays with is the idea of Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) and visits from aliens. In Chapter 5 Ford tells Arthur how he got trapped on earth when he hitched a ride with a 'teaser', one of the bored rich kids who look for planets that haven't made inter-stellar contact yet. They find an isolated spot and land in view of a lone observer. Then they strut around wearing antennae on their heads and making beeping noises, knowing full well no-one will ever believe it. (Think Roswell, New Mexico in the 1950s, Close Encounters, The Day the Earth Stood Still and the recent Netflix film The Vast of Darkness)



But there's almost always a trace. The recent discovery of a strange metal column in a remote part of the Utah desert seems to some to be evidence of an alien visitation.

Above all: what is the answer to the Great Question of Life, the Universe and Everything?

Other sci fi authors and films to look out for

Classics

H G Wells, *The War of the Worlds* (1897)
Frank Herbert, *Dune* (1965)
Robert A Heinlein, *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961)
Ursula Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969)
Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles* (1950)
Arthur C Clarke, *Childhood's End* (1953)
Isaac Asimov, *I, Robot* (1950)
Stanislaw Lem, *Solaris* (1961)
Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse 5*

More recent books

Terry Pratchett, *Discworld* series
William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (1984)
Andy Weir, *The Martian* (2015)
Naomi Alderman, *The Power* (2016)
James S A Corey, *Leviathan Wakes* (2011)
Ernest Cline, *Ready Player One* (2011)
Blake Crouch, *Dark Matter* (2016)

