



# Finding a Good Read

A column to help you find intriguing books

Erin

## Far from home

Books are ideal for taking us on journeys that we can't physically take ourselves.

While many stories focus on the pull of home and the battle to get back there, stories leading characters away from where they started can be even more dramatic.

### Classic Road Trips

Travelling the open road, ideally in a speedy convertible, has been a trope of American writing for decades.

Representing freedom and discovery, *On the Road* (Jack Kerouac), *The Lincoln Highway* (Amor Towles) and *The Motorcycle Diaries* (Ernesto "Che" Guevara) are famous examples of this genre.

*American Gods* (Neil Gaiman) offers its readers an escape from real life, and takes the concept of a road trip in a very different direction (metaphorically as well as literally).



### Getting your head down

Homes away from home can become the backdrop of amazing stories, as people from around the world meet, connect and make memories.

In *The Night Manager* (John le Carré), the protagonist is pulled away from his job in high-end hotels to a world of international spycraft and intrigue. *One Italian Summer* (Rebecca Serle) focuses on one glamorous and magical hotel, which allows a woman to reconnect with her recently deceased mother.

*Hotel du Lac* (Anita Brookner) and *A Room With A View* (E.M. Forster) both centre on British people in European accommodation. *A Gentleman in Moscow* (Amor Towles) makes the most of his lifelong 'house' arrest in a spectacular Russian hotel.

The Overlook Hotel in Stephen King's horror novel *The Shining* is much less charming, and would not be a recommended destination on Tripadvisor.

### Searching for something

People often take to the road in search of something they believe they can't get at home.

Sometimes this works out really well. Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love* and Raynor Winn's *The Salt Path* are real-life tales of people finding unexpected joy in different aspects of their journeys.

In *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* (Rachel Joyce) and *Less* (Andrew Sean Greer) the characters seek out lost friends, while in *The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out of the Window and Disappeared* (Jonas Jonasson) the protagonist seeks lost freedom.

In *Us* (David Nicholls) a fractured family travels across Europe in the hope of reestablishing old relationships, while new connections prove unexpectedly compelling.

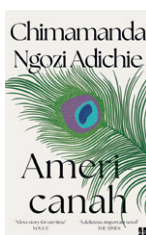
Sometimes the quest works out less well - the backpackers in *The Beach* (Alex Garland) find something very different to what they were hoping for.



### Onwards and upwards

Not all journeys are voluntary. Or exactly fun. *The Grapes of Wrath* (John Steinbeck) and *The Road* (Cormac McCarthy) tell different but equally dark stories of families on the road as they battle for survival.

J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* famously follows characters leaving their homes to try to save their world.



### New lands, new lives

Sometimes a move away from home means finding an entirely new one - sometimes for a summer, sometimes forever.

*Brooklyn* (Colm Tóibín), *Americanah* (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie) and *The Persians* (Sanaam Mahloudji) all explore themes of culture shock, adaptation and assimilation with female characters moving to the US. *Small Island* (Andrea Levy) does the same with women arriving in the post-Second World War UK.

*Under the Tuscan Sun* (Frances Mayes) and *Outline* (Rachel Cusk) show slightly warmer welcomes in the Mediterranean.

*A Passage to India* (E.M. Forster) and *The Quiet American* (Graham Greene) ask a lot of political questions about colonialism and who should be welcome in a foreign country.

With thanks to Give a Book and PRG volunteer Erin



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