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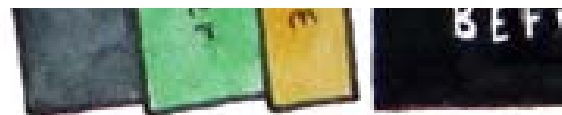
TRAVEL MANIFESTO

MAPTIA BLOG

WHAT

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By Maptia, Co-founder Team

8 COMMENTS

INSPIRATION

STORYTELLING

TRAVEL

Great books give our senses a workout. They make us laugh, cry and expand our emotional horizons, provide us with new perspectives, teach us about different realities, free us from feeling tranquillised with trivialities, and above all make us feel gloriously alive! Just in case your left-brain needs convincing—did you know that reading also keeps you mentally sharp, can chill you out and [relieve stress](#), and can even [increase your capacity for empathy](#)...

“ The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.

— Dr. Seuss

‘I already love books’, we hear you cry out. ‘But there are so many... I just don’t know where to start...’ —Ah ha! That is precisely why we have reached out to a few of our good friends with impeccable taste, and with their help, have compiled a short-list of thirteen somewhat under-appreciated but remarkable gems written in the last hundred years that deserve a place on your bookshelf for 2014.

1 | *The Ascent of Rum Doodle* by W.E. Bowman

Suggested by Mike Sowden—Head Bloke at [Fevered Mutterings](#)

“A parody, a tragedy, a farce and a sheer delight from start to finish, *The Ascent of Rum Doodle* is a spoof novel that has become just as popular within mountaineering circles as the real-life adventures it lampoons. It’s the story of what happens if you assemble the wrong men in the wrong place at the wrong time, of the consequences of having an expedition leader with the social IQ of Mr Bean, a route-finder with no sense of direction, a physician who is always ill, and graduates of Oxford and Cambridge deliberately put in the same tent together because they’d ‘have a lot to talk about’. Bill Bryson writes the foreword in the latest edition; it’s one of his favourite books.”

—Mike Sowden (@[mikeachim](#))

Find the Ascent of Rum Doodle [here](#).

2 | *Vagabonding* by Rolf Potts

Suggested by Tim Ferriss—[Four Hour Renaissance Man](#)

“Starting in 2004, I traveled the world for roughly 18 months. The lessons learned formed the basis for much of The 4-Hour Workweek. On my journey

—from the back alleys of Berlin to the hidden lakes of Patagonia—I had next to nothing: one suitcase, one backpack, and only two books. One of those books was *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau (naturally), and the other was *Vagabonding: An Uncommon Guide to the Art of Long-Term World Travel*. *Vagabonding* easily remains in my top-10 list for life-changing books. Why? Because one incredible trip, especially a long-term trip, can change your life forever.

Vagabonding teaches you how to travel (and think), not for one trip, but for the rest of your life. In my own dog-eared copy, I have notes, underlines, and highlights on practically every page, ranging from the tactical (how to pack intelligently, what to bring, what not to bring, where to go, etc.) to the philosophical (the Upanishads, how to slow down after a lifetime of rushing and caffeine, etc.) Using the Rolf's tips, I was able to explore many of them for 2-3 months at a time at my own pace, unrushed and unworried. It was a dream come true."

—Tim Ferriss (@[tferriss](#))

Check out the video trailer for *Vagabonding* below:



3 | *As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning* by Laurie Lee

Suggested by Alastair Humphreys—Explorer, author and [passionate microadventurer](#).

“This is the adventure I have wanted to do all my life. To be so footloose and carefree, living by your wits (busking in this case), and walking slowly across a landscape. Not only is it a great journey, it is also beautifully told.”

—Al Humphreys (@[Al_Humphreys](#))

Find *As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning* [here](#).

4 | *Cold* by Bill Streever

Suggested by Duncan Geere—Freelance journalist and [Wired contributor](#)

“It’s not easy to write poetically about science, but Bill Streever manages it wonderfully in *Cold*. The book is split into twelve chapters, named after the months of the year, and in each he explores a different facet of the world’s coldest places, peppered with personal anecdotes, historical references and

scientific facts. The dark accounts of the deaths of early Arctic explorers are balanced out by the tales he tells of communities and wildlife that thrive in places you'd never expect to be able to support life. It's a little Alaska-heavy, but highly recommended for anyone fascinated by the polar regions.”

—Duncan Geere (@[duncangeere](#))

Find Cold [here](#)

5 | *Edgelands* by Michael Symmons Roberts and Paul Farley

Also suggested by Duncan Geere, as he couldn't quite resist a double recommend!

“We’re very familiar with the concepts of cities and countryside, but what happens in between? The answer can be found in *Edgelands*, by poets Michael Symmons Roberts and Paul Farley. The pair journey into what they call “England’s true wilderness”—the forgotten places on the peripheries of cities that most people ignore as they whiz through in trains, buses and cars, where nature encroaches on the man-made. What’s particularly compelling about *Edgelands* is how the authors compile and rework other writers’ thoughts on the boundaries between humanity and the natural world, from Wordsworth to Mabey. It’s a well-researched, fascinating window on the places that your parents warned you not to go.”

—Duncan Geere (@[duncangeere](#))

Find Edgelands [here](#).

6 | *Macroscope* by Piers Anthony

Suggested by Alex Berger—Chief [Virtual Wayfarer](#)

“My dad introduced me to *Macroscope* when I was in my teens. The story, which revolves around the use of a space telescope similar to a super powerful version of the Hubble telescope, helped me view the world from above. The book paints a narrative where through the use of the Macroscope the researchers are able to watch and explore the social development of two alien races. Races not dissimilar from our own. This combined with my natural traveler’s curiosity and love of space to send my mind racing; exploring how our nations, religious structures, history, gender relations, and other quirks might be viewed by an alien race. In so doing, it gave me new insights and passion for exploring the subtle differences from person to person, region to region, and culture to culture. It also nurtured my intense curiosity about new cultures, new people, and then of course, what might be out there and as yet undiscovered on one of the countless planets located within the tens of billions of galaxies in the universe. It is also fascinating to think about how much the world has changed since the text was originally written in 1969. We now have the Hubble Space Telescope, things like Google Earth, and other tools that, while far from the power of the Macroscope, offer similar opportunities to explore the universe around us.”

—Alex Berger (@[alexberger](#))

Find Macroscope [here](#).

7 | *How Soccer Explains the World: An Unlikely Theory of Globalization* by Franklin Foer

Suggested by Audrey Scott—Chief Storyteller at [Uncornered Market](#)

“Who knew you could learn so much about globalization, economics and politics from soccer? Franklin Foer uses his love of soccer and journalism background to take the reader around the world examining soccer clubs and their culture and history from Argentina to Ukraine. The depth that he is able to go into to explain socioeconomic and geopolitical shifts connected to globalization through the lens of soccer is remarkable. And, it’s not always pretty—he shows how the soccer culture of a place has contributed to racism, corruption and even violence. Whether you’re a soccer fan or not, you’ll enjoy the stories and learn a lot in the process.”

—Audrey Scott (@[umarket](#))

Find *How Soccer Explains the World: An Unlikely Theory of Globalization* [here](#).

8 | *At the Tomb of the Inflatable Pig* by John Gimlette

Suggested by Jodi Ettenberg—Writer and Soup Expert at [LegalNomads](#)

“I love it because it’s a well-written and engaging take on a complicated country and its tragic historical turn, with personal details woven into the chapters.”

—Jodi Ettenberg (@[legalnomads](#))

Find At the Tomb of the Inflatable Pig [here](#).

9 | *How to be an Explorer of the World: A Portable Life Museum* by Keri Smith

Suggested by Jonny Miller— cofounder here at Maptia

“Keri Smith is convinced that everything in the world is fascinating. She persuades you that even the most mundane objects and places are worthy of your attention, if you are willing to ask the right questions. From attaching places to fictitious stories, to giving seemingly mundane objects superpowers—Keri peppers the book with fresh perspectives that will restore your childlike sense of astonishment for the everyday and leave the wheels of your imagination spinning long after you put it down.”

—Jonny Miller (@[jonnym1ller](#))

Find How to be an Explorer of the World: A Portable Life Museum [here](#).

10 | *Wild: An Elemental Journey* by Jay

Griffiths

Suggested by Dean Fischer—cofounder here at Maptia

“Wild provides a completely unique and enthralling view of our world. Jay Griffiths takes us along on her external and internal journey over seven years to the edges of the ‘civilised’ world, where language is a tool for seeing and where land, water, wind and fire are the anchors to our cultural roots and abounding sources of knowledge. Jay paints our home planet with an unsurpassed eloquence that will awaken the wild side of anybody. Get ready to yearn for wide-open landscapes, for freedom from the ever-encroaching, tainted mindsets of the ‘civilised’ world. Get ready to stand firmly on the side of our fragile, dwindling wildernesses as they burn with what could be their final flame, and fight for their last breath. With unexpected emotional force, the tales of misplaced ideals, misspoken words, and misused knowledge shook me with sadness when contrasted with the complex and emotional depiction of these delicate corners of our planet.”

—Dean Fischer (@[deanfischer_](#))

Find Wild [here](#).

11 | *The Clan of the Cave Bear* by Jean M. Auel

“There is no book—or should I say books—I have read which have captured my imagination, or my heart, more than the six adventurous and gripping

tales in the *Earth's Children* Series by Jean M. Auel. Set around 30,000 years before the present day, during the dawn of mankind, *The Clan of the Cave Bear* is the beginning of Ayla's remarkable story. Set against the backdrop of a wildly beautiful but sparsely populated and treacherous continent, the vivid descriptions of the landscapes Ayla travels through will have you longing to explore the world around you, and to get closer to nature yourself. The scope and scale that the books encompass is almost impossible to comprehend, and for me, the themes and emotions explored in this ancient story offer an unusual and astoundingly thoughtful insight into the fabric of our society today and our cultural roots as the dominant species on planet Earth. No-one can fail to be moved by Ayla's journey through life, as she travels across what will one day become Europe, experiencing the people and landscapes around her with curiosity, insight—and above all—courage.”

—Dorothy Sanders (@[doro1hy](#))

Find *The Clan of the Cave Bear* [here](#).

What's that? You'd like more? Oh alright then, here are a couple of absolutely visually stunning and remarkable books chosen by the Maptia Team...

12 | *Steve McCurry Untold: The Stories Behind the Photographs* by Steve McCurry

Steve McCurry has spent more than three decades following his curiosity

around the globe. You may have heard that during his various adventures he survived a plane crash in Slovenia, as well as armed robbers and bombings in Afghanistan, but what we feel shines through in his photography is his trademark unquenchable sense of wonder and curiosity for the world around him. Harking back to [Al Humphreys sentiments on adventuring](#), Steve believes that compelling photography doesn't require exotic travel, but that he simply needed to wander and explore. Talking to Art Space he wrote:

“ It's a joy to be alive, and maybe that's what come through.

Steve's photography is uplifting and affecting in equal measure, yet *Untold Stories* is more than just a visual feast to perch on your coffee table—it is an insightful journey into the life of this remarkable human. To leaf through its pages is to peer behind his world famous lens and dive into the hand scribbled notes and scrapbook-esque momentos from his adventures in every corner of the globe. In *Untold Stories* you get a sense of the man behind the lens, delving into his philosophies, which we felt were aptly summed up with these timeless words of his:

“ Nothing has dented my faith in the human spirit or in unexpected human kindness... the kindest were often those who lived in the harshest of conditions.

If you've been hiding under a rock for the past 30 years and aren't familiar with Steve's photography, then [his blog](#) should already be loading in your next tab

whilst you watch this video below:



13 | *Before They Pass Away* by Jimmy Nelson

Jimmy Nelson traveled to the ends of the earth in the hope of immortalising the world's least-touched tribes. The results are nothing less than spellbinding—Jimmy is like a modern Doctor Who, who makes inter-dimensional voyages possible via his 4x5 large-plate field camera instead of a TARDIS. There is a strong sense of human purpose behind his project, he writes:

“ These tribes, although we don’t necessarily have to be personally interested in them, they represent

for us an individuality, a balance that we've lost.

Even if this ethnographic balance can never be fully restored, we admire Jimmy's resolve to document and witness tribal traditions that are threatened by the forces of globalisation and couldn't tear our eyes away from his remarkable and compelling visual catalog.

To end on an entertaining note, check out Jimmy's TEDx Talk and learn why yellow snow and reindeer make for a hilarious consequences at the edge of the world.



Know anyone who might appreciate having a few of these books in their lives? Whatever you do, don't @mention them in this tweet: ["13 Remarkable Reads for 2014"](#) curated by [@Maptia](#) and friends

Want to join our community of founding storytellers and receive our top stories newsletter? [Signup here](#)

Which literary or visual gems have we missed? Let us know which books you think we should be putting on our bookshelves for 2014 in the comments below...



What I Love about Kyoto | by Pico Iyer - One of our top featured stories on [Maptia.com](#)



Seven Steps to Becoming a Spontaneous Explorer of the World - Onward! ¡Vamos! Allons-y!



Maptia

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You like this.

🕒 12 December, 2013

📍 Taghazout, Morocco

< WANDER BACK

GO FORTH >

Featured Comment



Gregory Hubbs

Thanks Jonny. I love your website. I figured that you were aware of these classics.

I just wanted to throw some ideas out there that are often controversial for some reason, as I know too few people (backpackers, even) these days who have never read Rimbaud, Baudelaire, Artaud, and Nietzsche for example, who were idolized by rock n roll stars like Dylan, Patti Smith, Jim Morrison, et al as well as the U.S. "beats" (my parents among them) who worshiped their timeless poetry and symbolism. My 74-year-old mother is writing a book on the ill-fated travels of Rimbaud, perhaps an extension of his poetic adventures, after his "retirement" from poetry at 20.

I noticed that you have a very fine interview with Rolf Potts on your site where he describes his discovery and life in Paris--my long-time home away from home--and great poets and artists such as Rimbaud and Baudelaire who lurk there like aesthetic ghosts.

Great work and I look forward to your future articles, which I often recommend on <http://www.outbounding.org> where I discovered your great blog, where great content and aesthetics are brought to a whole new level.

I will add your book recommendations to my book list...

^ | v · Share >

8 Comments

Favorite ★



Join the discussion...



Dom Jackman · 8 months ago

The Escape Manifesto

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/The-Es...>

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share >



Gregory Hubbs · 5 months ago

Always a good idea for a list to provoke discussion. Apart from Vagabonding, I did not see some of the great travel literature from across the ages, nor many of the poems from the archetypal vagabonds and aesthetes such as Rimbaud and Baudelaire. Homer's Odyssey takes you on a journey unlike any other as does Conrad's Heart of Darkness.

There is a bias against the classical/ancient here, and so much is lost when we do not read from the universal past. Perhaps I am biased, as both my parents were professors of literature, due only to love their love of reading, and I spent years in college at home and abroad only to read ideas by thinkers across the ages.

In fact, my idea of an education, and I consider to be a lifetime occupation for the curious mind, was to read only the great geniuses in the history of ideas, hoping only to grasp a fraction of their dialog with each other

across the ages and across cultures. I cannot imagine being a vagabond and not reading Nietzsche like the bible. Like great classical music or jazz, the books can be read again and again with new vistas opened up.

Great books have no dates, not 2014 A.D. not 100 A.D., in my view. They resonate every year.

^ | v · Reply · Share >



Jonny Miller Mod → GregoryHubbs · 5 months ago

Thanks for the sparking the discussion Gregory – and I agree that the great works of travel literature are timeless. This was by no means meant to be an exhaustive list, and no date bias was intended! We merely wanted to ask a few of our friends whom we knew had great taste to suggest one (lesser-known) book each. (for the record I graduated in philosophy and also have a dog-eared copy of 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra' on my bedside cabinet!)

I rather like the idea of doing a followup travel reading list but one that cannot include any books written in the last 100 years... keep a look out for it in the future ;)

^ | v · Reply · Share >



Gregory Hubbs



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I noticed that you have a very fine interview with Rolf Potts on your site where he describes his discovery and life in Paris--my long-time home away from home--and great poets and artists such as Rimbaud and Baudelaire who lurk there like aesthetic ghosts.

Great work and I look forward to your future articles, which I often recommend on <http://www.outbounding.org> where I discovered your great blog, where great content and aesthetics are brought to a whole new level.

I will add your book recommendations to my book list...

^ | v · Reply · Share >



Jonny Miller Mod → GregoryHubbs · 4 months ago

Thanks for the kind words and happy to hear that you enjoyed the interview with Rolf. His 'vagabonding' was a large influence in inspiring me to get out into the world after leaving school so it was a real honour to be able to pick his brains and also to receive such wonderfully thoughtful answers.

I suppose that part of the reason for diminished interest in the classics is that there is now just *so much* interestingness out there to read, see, watch & learn

about that the Rimbaud's and Nietzsche's of the literary world have more trouble competing for attention than they did a few generations ago. Still it would be great to see a revival of some of these classics ;)

That's amazing that your mother is writing an extension of his poetic adventures... I hope to still have such a creative spark myself in 50 years time!

^ | v · Reply · [Share](#) >



Chris · 8 months ago

whatever Tim Ferriss recommends should be a must read :D

^ | v · Reply · [Share](#) >



Dilanka Wettewa → Chris · 8 months ago

Great objective view there big guy.

1 ^ | v · Reply · [Share](#) >



Florian Komm · 8 months ago

Brains versus Capital of Guenter Faltn

^ | v · Reply · [Share](#) >

DISQUS