



The Art of Travel (Vintage International)

By Alain De Botton

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Any Baedeker will tell us *where* we ought to travel, but only Alain de Botton will tell us *how* and *why*. With the same intelligence and insouciant charm he brought to **How Proust Can Save Your Life**, de Botton considers the pleasures of anticipation; the allure of the exotic, and the value of noticing everything from a seascape in Barbados to the takeoffs at Heathrow.

Even as de Botton takes the reader along on his own peregrinations, he also cites such distinguished fellow-travelers as Baudelaire, Wordsworth, Van Gogh, the biologist Alexander von Humboldt, and the 18th-century eccentric Xavier de Maistre, who catalogued the wonders of his bedroom. **The Art of Travel** is a wise and utterly original book. Don't leave home without it.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

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- Sales Rank: #182997 in eBooks
- Published on: 2008-11-19
- Released on: 2008-11-19
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

An experienced traveler and the author of five books, including *How Proust Can Change Your Life*, De Botton here offers nine essays concerning the art of travel. Divided into five sections "Departure," "Motives," "Landscape," "Art," and "Return" the essays start with one of the author's travel experiences, meander through artists or writers related to it, and then intertwine the two. De Botton's style is very thoughtful and dense; he considers events of the moment and relates them to his internal dialog, showing how experiences from the past affect the present. In "On Curiosity," for example, which describes a weekend in Madrid, De Botton compares his reliance on a very detailed guidebook to the numerous systematic measurements Alexander von Humboldt made during his 1799 travels in South America. De Botton compares Humboldt's insatiable desire for detail with his own ennui and wish that he were home. There are also details about a fight over dessert, the van Gogh trail in Provence, and Wordsworth's vision of nature. Although well written and interesting, this volume will have limited popular appeal. Recommended for larger public libraries. Alison Hopkins, Brantford P.L., ON
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From [Booklist](#)

Rather than lavishing pages on the sumptuous taste of a sun-ripened olive in Provence, philosopher de Botton examines what inspires us to escape the humdrum and purchase tickets to Tahiti, tromp through the countryside, or wander Rome. Left to one voice, such an inquiry might grow dull, but de Botton uses the lives and works of artists and writers to explore the premise. With each chapter, the author dissects our motivation to depart normality and go (he quotes Baudelaire) "anywhere, anywhere!" De Botton's anecdotal accounts of his own travels illustrate the theme of each chapter, such as exoticism or escapism, showing the unexpected (but all too common) disappointments inherent in getting away. Then, using the interior and artistic lives of others, de Botton probes the psychological underpinnings of why we go. The book shines when discussing Flaubert's lifelong urge for Egypt and painter Edward Hopper's affinity for the desolation of fuel stops and Automats. This literary travelogue feeds hungry readers seeking self-insight. *Nicole Waller*
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Review

"A jewel of civility, wit and insight; de Botton has produced wondrous essays. An invitation to hyperbole . . . a volume to give one an expansive sense of wonder."—*The Baltimore Sun*

"Illuminating. . . a lovely combination of enthusiasm, sensitivity, a care for the large and small, and the local and the foreign. . . reading de Botton's book will help a person discover something fabulous in everyday.—*Chicago Tribune*

"There is something Proustian in **The Art of Travel**, in the best sense, for Mr. de Botton is a kind of *flaneur*, strolling through his subject thoughtfully and offering nuanced truths based on his reading, experience and philosophical temperament."—*The Wall Street Journal*

"It would be difficult to name a writer as erudite and yet as reader friendly. . . With a wry, self-deprecating charm, he passes his enthusiasms along in such manner that you can't help being delighted by them." — *The Seattle Times*

"[R]efreshing and profoundly readable. . . Thanks to de Botton's detailed and thoughtful writing, coupled

with his clever curiosity, *The Art of Travel* has the potential to enrich not only our journeys, but also our lives.” –*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

“[De Botton] relates even the most disappointing experiences with delightful wit, graceful prose and surprising insight..” –*The Los Angeles Times*

“Wickedly funny . . . De Botton travels like the rest of us, but he brings with him the amazing erudition, crisp, lovely prose, and entertaining intellect that made **How Proust Can Change Your Life** and **The Consolations of Philosophy** such phenomenal successes.” –*The Boston Globe*

“[E]xudes erudition and artfulness. . . . Delightful.” –*Minneapolis Star-Tribune*

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