

THE TRAVEL BOOK

A JOURNEY THROUGH EVERY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD

MELBOURNE | OAKLAND | LONDON





THE STORY OF THE TRAVEL BOOK

Most travel journeys take in just a country or two, but the journey you're about to embark on incorporates every country on earth. In this book you'll find evocative glimpses of every single country in the world, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, from the postage-stamp-sized Vatican City to the epic expanse of the Russian Federation.

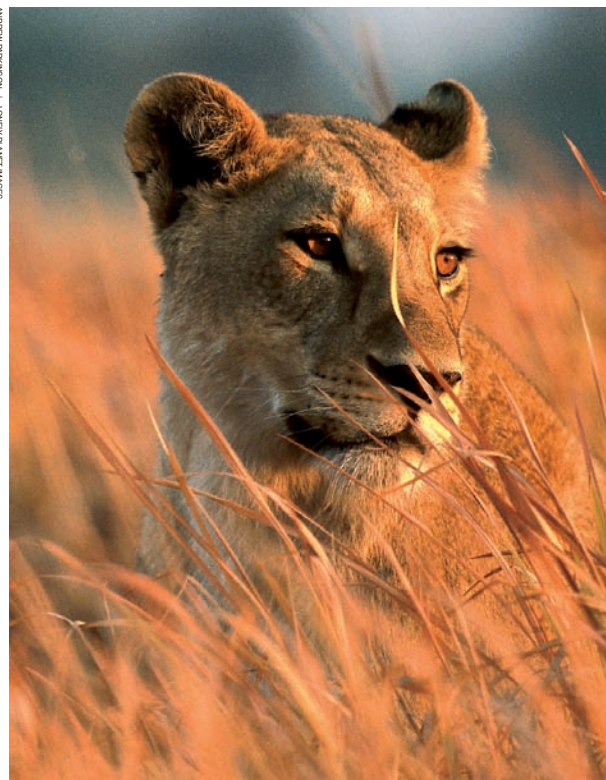
To actually visit all the countries in this book would require several passports and a suitcase of plane tickets, or it can be simulated with a turn of these pages. Highlighted by some of the finest photography in the world, the *Travel Book* offers a glimpse of each country's perks and quirks: when to go, what to see, how to eat it up and drink it in, and ways to immerse yourself in the life and the land. What results is a grand snapshot of our diverse and kaleidoscopic world rather than an encyclopedic reference. It's a book that unashamedly views the planet through the prism of the traveller, focusing on places for their beauty, charm or singularity, even if this does sometimes conflict with defined political or geographical borders.

THE COUNTRY CONUNDRUM

A country count can be an arbitrary thing. At its core we've used the UN's list of 192 member states. Every one of these countries features in the book, but we've also built on the list to include foreign dependencies, whether they be self-governing or not, that are popular traveller

destinations. Thus you'll find Caribbean islands (Anguilla, Cayman Islands, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Puerto Rico, Turks & Caicos, Virgin Islands), Atlantic islands (Bermuda, Falkland Islands) and Pacific islands (Cook Islands, Guam & Northern Marianas, New Caledonia, Pitcairn Islands, Tahiti & French Polynesia). There are

the two great land masses of Antarctica and Greenland, which are too large and fascinating to leave out of any true world guide. There are disputed lands such as Palestine, Kosovo, Tibet and Taiwan, and recognisably unique regions such as Hong Kong, Macau and French Guiana. We've also divided Great Britain into its



component parts – England, Scotland and Wales – to recognise their individual appeal and their rich and distinctive histories and cultures.

At the book's end you'll find an additional 11 places of interest, chosen by Lonely Planet's founder and chief frequent-flyer Tony Wheeler. These bonus destinations are small dependencies that still warrant great attraction, whether it be the smoking cigar of Montserrat or that little piece of Britannia on the Mediterranean – Gibraltar. In total, you can read about 229 countries and destinations. It's exhausting just to think about.

THE STRUCTURE

The *Travel Book* follows the most straightforward of formats – A to Z – rolling through the alphabet of nations. From a

travellers' perspective, a country's might and power aren't necessarily relative to its fascination and appeal, and we've tried to capture that, giving equal weight to every country regardless of whether it has had 15 minutes or 15 centuries of world fame – the likes of Djibouti and Suriname are as noteworthy here as the superpowers of the US and China.

The book's guiding philosophy is to present a subjective view of the world from Lonely Planet's perspective, looking below the surface to show a slice of life from every country in the world. Entries evoke the spirit of each place by appealing to the senses – what you might see and feel, what kind of food and drink might flavour your visit, and which books, music or films will help prepare you for the experience. You'll find the events, objects and people

that are central to each country's identity and you'll find curious, little known facts.

Photos are paramount to capturing and sharing the spirit of a place and its people, and images in this book have been chosen to weave stories of their own. Clichéd icons and picture-postcard views have been avoided in favour of photos that tell of life in its myriad forms – at work, at play, at worship, laughing, singing, relaxing, dancing or just surviving – in order to bring you countries not brochures.

You may never visit all the *Travel Book's* destinations, but if it's true, as Aldous Huxley once wrote, that 'to travel is to discover that everyone is wrong about other countries', then to read about them all is to find out if you are right.

We hope the *Travel Book* inspires a world of travel.



TOM WHEELER | LONELY PLANET IMAGES

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JANE SHENBERG | LONELY PLANET IMAGES

In another world, Afghanistan would be near the top of any list of must-see tourist destinations. The crossroads of Asia, it has blended cultural ingredients from the Indian subcontinent, Central Asia and Persia into something quite unique. Old Silk Road oases tell of a rich history of Buddhist and Islamic empires, while the Hindu Kush Mountains that bisect the country are as beautiful as Afghan hospitality is famously warm. Unfortunately, Afghanistan's recent troubled history is equally as famous, from the Soviet invasion to the continued trauma the country suffers following the Western intervention that ended Taliban rule. Afghan resilience and their desire for peace offer the ultimate key to the country's future.

BEST TIME TO VISIT

April to June and September to October – with all visits highly dependent on the political weather

TOP THINGS TO SEE

- The slow transformation of Kabul from war-ravaged capital to bustling Central Asian city
- The dizzying 800-year-old Minaret of Jam, adrift in the central mountains
- The skyline of Herat's medieval old city, punctuated by its mighty citadel and thicket of minarets
- The blue domes of Mazar-e Sharif's Shrine of Hazrat Ali, Afghanistan's holiest pilgrimage site
- The Panjshir Valley, with its rushing river and neat villages and orchards

TOP THINGS TO DO

- Contemplate the ruins of the giant Buddha statues amid the serene Bamiyan Valley
- Trek with yaks across the High Pamir mountains in the Wakhan Corridor
- Dip your toes in the blue mineral waters of the Band-e Amir lakes
- Watch a thundering *buzkashi* match – Afghan polo played with a headless goat instead of a ball
- Haggle for Afghan carpets at their source with Pashtun, Uzbek and Turkmen traders

GETTING UNDER THE SKIN

Read Eric Newby's witty *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush*, a genuine classic; Rory Stewart's *The Places In Between* makes an excellent post-Taliban travelogue

Watch *Osama*, directed by Siddiq Barmak, telling the story of a girl assuming a male identity to work in Taliban-era Kabul

Eat fat Kandahari pomegranates; sweet grapes from the Shomali Plain; and (according to Marco Polo) the best melons in the world

Drink *chai sabz* (green tea), drunk scaldingly hot at a traditional teahouse

IN A WORD

Salam aleikum (Peace be with you) – a ubiquitous greeting and blessing

TRADEMARKS

Bearded and turbaned men; veil-clad women; mountain views; tribal rugs; opium poppies; hospitality to guests

RANDOM FACT

The lapis lazuli in Tutankhamun's death mask were mined in northeastern Afghanistan



MAP REF J,27

1. Pilgrims arrive to pay their respects at the Shrine of Hazrat Ali, one of the country's most iconic sights
2. An Afghani man in Mazar-e Sharif sports an impressive beard typical of many locals
3. It's a good idea to find some shade in Kabul's warmer months
4. The remote and spectacular Minaret of Jam, rising 65m high, is Afghanistan's first World Heritage Site



ROSS BARNETT | LONELY PLANET IMAGES

Australia is as big as your imagination. Sure it's got deadly spiders, snakes and sharks, but they don't stop people from coming here, let alone living here. And for good reason. From endless sunbaked plains to dense tropical rainforest and wild southern beaches, Australia's biggest attraction is its natural beauty. Scattered along the coasts, its cities blend a European enthusiasm for art and food with a passionate love of sport and the outdoors. Visitors expecting to see an opera in Sydney one night and meet Crocodile Dundee the next day will have to rethink their geography; it is the sheer vastness that gives Australia – and its population – such immense character.

BEST TIME TO VISIT

Any time: when it's cold down south it's warm up north

TOP THINGS TO SEE

- The never-ending sunburnt horizons of the outback
- Kangaroos, koalas, platypuses and other near-alien, uniquely Australian critters
- A concert, dance or theatrical performance at the country's most recognisable icon, the Sydney Opera House
- The red hues of Uluru, an awe-inspiring place that is both ancient and sacred
- Broome, where the desert meets the sea in contrasting aquamarines, rust-reds and pearl whites

TOP THINGS TO DO

- Immerse yourself in the underwater world surrounding the only living structure visible from space, the Great Barrier Reef
- Discover Aboriginal culture, rock art and biological diversity at majestic Kakadu National Park
- Disappear into the wilderness along the Overland Track, Tasmania
- Breathe in the perfumes of bush and beach while driving the Great Ocean Road
- Sip on a well-balanced shiraz in the Barossa Valley

GETTING UNDER THE SKIN

Read *Cloudstreet*, Tim Winton's fascinating novel that chronicles the lives of two families thrown together in post-WWII Perth

Listen to Slim Dusty's 'Pub with No Beer', a classic Australian country tune; the soothing Aboriginal voice of Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu on his album *Gurrumul*

Watch *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, a true story about three relocated Aboriginal girls who trek 2400km to return to their families

Eat fresh Sydney rock oysters; barely cooked purple-red kangaroo meat; Vegemite

Drink boutique beer; or any one of a huge selection of local wines

IN A WORD

G'day mate!

TRADEMARKS

Dangerous creatures; surfing; endless coastlines; outback pubs; barbecues; wildlife warriors; beer; Aussie Rules football; sunshine; Aboriginal art; convicts

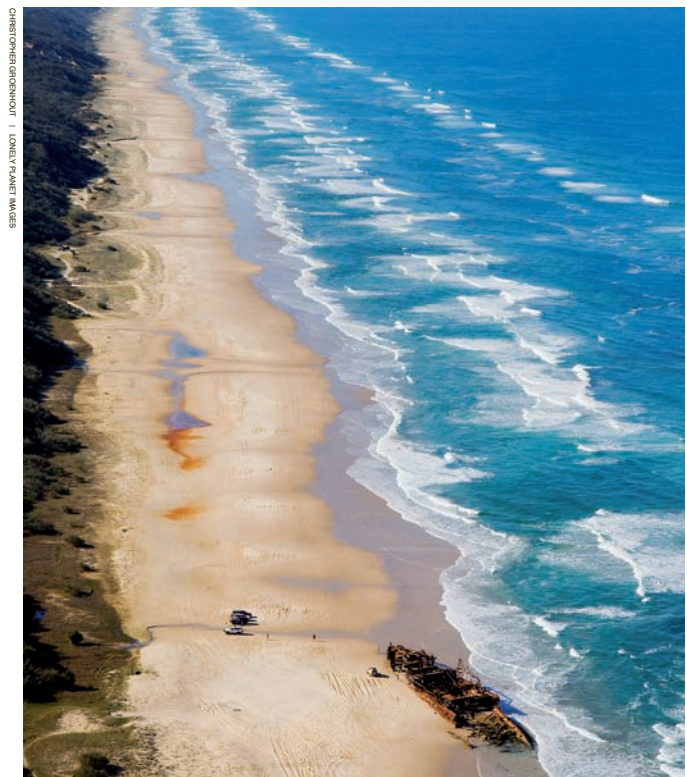
RANDOM FACT

Great Australian inventions include the bionic ear, the black box flight recorder, the note pad and the wine cask



MAP REF R,34

1. Majestic hues characterise the outback scenery near Kookynie, Western Australia
2. One of Australia's iconic images: the Sydney Harbour Bridge sparkling over the harbour
3. A young Aboriginal dancer on Cape York Peninsula is marked with ceremonial paint
4. Hit by a freak cyclone in 1935, the shipwrecked *Maheno* still lies on Seventy Five Mile Beach, Fraser Island



CHRISTOPHER GRONHOFF | LONELY PLANET IMAGES

There are few places that feel more in the heart of Europe than this, a multilingual country smack-bang in the middle of Western Europe that Dutch-speaking Flemish in the north call *België*, and French-speaking Walloons in the south call *La Belgique*. Indeed, it's this north-south, cultural and linguistic divide that makes this unusually intimate country with such dreary wet weather so unexpectedly fascinating. Amble in the shade of sensual art-nouveau architecture in its capital; give a nod to the EU headquarters; surrender to the sweet seduction of Europe's finest chocolate; have a ball in Antwerp's avant-garde fashion and dance clubs; down a fine local beer or three; and know this is what Belgians north and south call the good life.

BEST TIME TO VISIT

May to September

TOP THINGS TO SEE

- Brussels' guildhalls of medieval craftsmen on Grand Place
- Galeries St Hubert, the grande dame of 19th-century shopping arcades, and nearby rue des Bouchers with its barking hawkers and bevy of dining addresses
- Medieval Bruges
- Go-slow Ghent – explore it by bike
- In Antwerp, Belgium's largest Gothic cathedral Onze Lieve Vrouwekathedraal and the four paintings by Rubens inside

TOP THINGS TO DO

- Meet the art-nouveau movement at the Musée Horta, Brussels
- Get gooey over expensive and extraordinary pralines and truffles by prized chocolate-maker Pierre Marcolini
- Shop for fashion by local designers, fine dine and dance until dawn in Antwerp
- Chill in the French-speaking town of La Roche-en-Ardenne
- Join beer pilgrims in In de Vrede – the Westvleteren trio brewed is Belgium's best

GETTING UNDER THE SKIN

Read two hilarity-packed chapters on Belgium by Bill Bryson in *Neither Here nor There*

Listen to harmonica virtuoso Toots Thielemans blast the best of Belgian jazz with *Hard to Say Goodbye – The Very Best of Toots Thielemans*

Watch *Le Silence de Lorna* (Lorna's Silence) – the grim tale of an Albanian girl growing up in Belgium – by Belgian film-making brothers Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne

Eat a steaming cauldron of mussels cooked in white wine with a mountain of *frietten/frites* (fries or chips)

Drink Trappist beer brewed by monks in Rochefort

IN A WORD

Dag/Bonjour (Hello in Dutch/French)

TRADEMARKS

Chocolate; beer; cafe culture; comic-strip hero Tintin; the EU; Battle of Waterloo; 1960s *chansonnier* Jacques Brel; art-nouveau architecture

RANDOM FACT

Belgium's real-time linguistic divide was carved in stone in 1962 when the official line was drawn between Dutch-speaking Flanders and French-speaking Wallonia



1. The Cathedral of St Bavon makes for a great landmark when you've been out on the town in Ghent
2. Explore the old town of Ghent for character-filled bars and Belgian beer
3. Get into the festive spirit at the Carnival of Binche
4. Whimsical colours accent the beautiful architecture in the popular Flemish city of Bruges



PHOTOLIBRARY



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