

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 nation 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 Gibraltar, that little piece of Britannia on the Mediterranean. 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.





