



Granta 124: Travel

John Freeman (Editor), Siddhartha Mukherjee (Contributor), Hari Kunzru (Contributor), Miroslav Penkov (Contributor), Haruki Murakami (Contributor)

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Hari Kunzru travels to Chernobyl, Detroit, and Japan to investigate the phenomenon of disaster tourism. Policeman-turned-detective-turned-writer A Yi describes life as a provincial gumshoe in China. Physician Siddhartha Mukherjee visits a government hospital in New Delhi, where he meets Madha Sengupta, at the end of his life and on the frontiers of medicine. Robert Macfarlane explores the limestone world beneath the Peak District. And Haruki Murakami revisits his walk to Kobe in the aftermath of the 1995 earthquake.

In this issue--which includes poems by Charles Simic and Ellen Bryant Voigt, a story by Miroslav Penkov, and non-fiction by David Searcy, Teju Cole, and Hector Abad--GRANTA presents a panoramic view of our shared landscape and investigates our motivations for exploring it. One's destination is never a place," Henry Miller wrote, but a new way of seeing things."

Granta 124: Travel Details

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From Reader Review Granta 124: Travel for online ebook

Mikaela says

Some great stories in this issue, but mostly mediocre stuff

Highlights:

The Captain (Rattawut Lapcharoensap)-Sprawling crime story which starts off making you think it will be some cliché travel-love story; pretty funny also kind of annoying (intentional?)

Underland (Robert Macfarlane)-My favorite story by far. Been wanting to read his stuff, and this convinced me that I'm definitely missing out. Talks about his trip in a cave.

Tour Guide (Phil Clay)- Found art piece discussing the dichotomous photo album of a WW2 veteran. Tourist pictures and cutesy labels next to pictures of war victims and destruction.

Compass Plant (Rachel Boast)- Poem. Just read it. It's good.

The Best Hotel (Sonia Faleiro)- A simultaneously stoic and comical look into child trafficking in India

Water Has No Enemy (Teju Cole)- Cole goes back to his home country and notes a few choice moments where he felt like a foreigner in his own country.

Owen says

A Walk to Kobe is Murakami's reflection on age, his past, and violence. He writes of a trip he took to some places from his youth and discusses how they have changed since he had been there. After detailing a few violent attacks, Murakami questions why violent things happen.

At first I wasn't sure what purpose this article served. It was published in a travel issue of Granta, you can read it here and I assume it is just a collection of thoughts he had while walking around Kobe. The writing is pretty interesting and his stories may be relatable to some people. If you have a few minutes, you should take a look at this.

Carol says

Enjoyed reading stories set in different locales around the world. This is not a tourism guide but literature embodying different cultures.

Mary Warnement says

Not your usual "travel writing." Underland almost gave me an attack of claustrophobia on the subway.

Eggers portrayed a sense with his usual succinct eye. I'd never heard of David Searcy and have no idea why his story is called Hudson River School. A rationalist in the jungle and walk to Kobe both made me think about places I'd never been in a familiar way. I first sought out this volume b/c someone somewhere praised Water has no enemy. These essays didn't make me want to go to the places they describe; they made me think about where I've been, where I'm from, and where I'm going.

Efemia says

I actually missed my stop on the train while reading the story by Hector Abad. I devoured this, perhaps because I haven't travelled in a while and am heavily wanderlusting.

A spectacular issue: the highlights being a surreal nightmare/dream trip somewhere in South Asia by Rattawut Lapcharoensap, Haruki Murakami's reflective piece on post-earthquake Kobe, the danger and bombastic appeal of Teju Cole's Nigeria trip, and "the green desert" - paradoxes of the Colombian jungle as explained by Hector Abad. A lovely mix of fiction, fiction and narrative non-fiction.

Read it, it will take your soul places.

"Money was a solution that always became a problem. It was constantly bringing us into contact with such wonderful people only to immediately get in the way" - The Captain, Rattawut Lapcharoensap

Will Mego says

Like any compilation of writing, there's that which hits, and that which misses. The theme of this edition of Granta was that of travel; that's a theme I've always found to be problematic for this sort of thing, and this was no exception. There were stories and essays I wanted to enjoy but didn't, and those I was surprised by. The story by Siddhartha Mukherjee was excellent, and I was surprised by how much I enjoyed the Dave Eggers. I felt the poetry was a little uneven, and suffered in comparison to some of the better efforts. Overall I did enjoy reading this, though I'm glad I did so in a library rather than paying for it; I'd have been a little disappointed to pay the asking price for it.

Daniel says

"In a sense, our lives are nothing more but a series of stages to help us get used to loneliness."

Patrick McCoy says

was inspired to read Granta 124: Travel (2013) because of the general theme of travel and the fact that it contained pieces by three of my favorite contemporary writers: Rattawut Lapcharoen, Dave Eggers, and Haruki Murakami. That being said I was disappointed by all of them save Murakami, who had an interesting

nonfiction piece about walking in his former hometown of Kobe years after the 1995 earthquake ravaged the area. Lapcharoen (author of a impressive short story collection, Sightseeing, in his debut) wrote a strange story, "The Captain," about a Thai American who returns to SE Asia for his honeymoon and is separated from his wife and held captive by locals who drain his bank accounts. I couldn't discern if he was trying to make a statement about modern Thailand or whether he was making some sort of personal metaphor out of the situation. Egger's story was something like a real life anecdote written as fiction and not very memorable. That being said there several other more memorable pieces such as Hector Abad's memoir about a visit to the Colombian amazon jungle in "A Rationalist in the Jungle." Another interesting piece was "Barrenland" by A Yi, which at first i mistook for a short story, but turned out to be memoir by a rural Chinese policeman. "Water Has No Enemy" by Nigerian writer Teju Cole was another enticing personal memoir about calamities and other extraordinary events that took place on a return visit to Lagos. I also found the photo essay "Tour Gide," with commentary by Phil Klay with WWII photos from Colonel A. Black, fascinating. There were more nonfiction pieces in this collection than usual and there were several pieces that didn't appeal to me on some level.

Anubhav says

This is a travelogue with a difference. It describes journeys, landscapes, vistas and people.

Two of the best short stories read in a long time are in this book (some spoilers ahead)

- Blood Money by Miroslav Penkov (a heart-rending account from the intersection of personal memories, media hunger for a good story that may lead to personal upliftment, unshakeable weight of immense poverty, early surrogate motherhood as revenue generative, 'honour' of Gypsy blood feud across generations -- not live and let live - not live and let die - but live and raise sons to kill)
 - The Perfect Last Day of Mr. Sengupta by Siddhartha Mukherjee (grace and courage in death of old age...)
- are two of the best short stories i have read in the recent past.
-

Chris says

Every Granta is excellent, but Granta does Travel best. Miroslav Penkov's story may be one of the best stories I've ever read.

I am curious why David Searcy's story about, predominantly, a Texas rancher is called The Hudson River School. There's mention of Colonial Nantucket, and the vast landscapes of the settings are well represented, the title seems a distant allusion. I'll reread that story.

T P Kennedy says

One of the dullest Grantas I've read. Travel writing is not my thing but I foolishly assumed that Granta would bring a more interesting or provocative slant to the topic. This is primarily non fiction and even the piece by the inspirational Teju Cole isn't worth the price of admission.

Susan Emmet says

This edition of Granta brought me to places I've never been...and to many I'd prefer to avoid.

A fine mixture of essays, poetry, and photographs.

Steffi Klentz's pictures of lost travelers and explorers are amazing, as is her technique of exposing old photos to corrosive ocean bacteria, lending a crackling to the pictures.

A Yi's "Barrenland" is amazing. So is "A Rationalist in the Jungle." The darkness of "Blood Money" is stark and clear. I also liked "Nuestra Senora De La Asuncion."

Granta is one of the finest quarterlies around.

So like the way of using various guest editors and consistently pulling in so many writers from all over the world.

Mark says

I am developing a repulsion for the term "travel writing" because to me it connotes articles written for travel magazines about where to spend your next vacation. It's not literary nonfiction. Stories about elsewhere is much more apt for the kind of literary nonfiction that takes place somewhere else. This excellent collection contains everything from a story about being abducted in Thailand to stories about drowning in Lagos, and a lot of other well told stories in between. Nothing about vacations however.

Ammar says

One of my favourite Granta issues

Travel is important, it expands ones horizon and one learns a lot about him/herself and about the world around us.

This collection goes out in the world, the world that we hear of and see in documentaries, but never venture to.

Murakami's walk to Kobe is an excellent piece about the joy of walking back into your childhood and what happened to a city that you once lived in, after being away for decades.

I loved Steffi Klentz art .. the portraits of those lost in sea and how she exposed those pictures to algae and sea bacteria and how they affected the final product.

Each and every piece in this collection is worthy and takes you someone from the slums of India to the Gypsy camps in Romania.

Rebecca says

Blood Money is my favorite piece. It is a work of fiction, both humanely real, and inhumanly shocking at the same time.

Another one that stands out for me is Barrenland.

Both are depictions of everyday life of some people, in some parts of the world. I do not know how much of it is fiction and how much is real. I do not wish to know, ever.
