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Canada's number one humorist, routinely compared to our own Bill Bryson, has written a funny, idiosyncratic, and warmly humane book full of sly observations and witty stories culled from his travels among the people and places of our neighbors up north.

Will Ferguson spent the past three years crisscrossing Canada. In a helicopter above the barren lands of the subarctic, in a canoe with his four-year-old son, aboard seaplanes, and along the Underground Railroad, Will's travels have taken him from Cape Spear on the coast of Newfoundland to the sun-dappled streets of old Victoria.

Funny, poignant, and insightful, *Beauty Tips from Moose Jaw* is a provocative tribute to a land that is akin to a series of loosely connected outposts peopled with some of the most interesting folks in the world.

Beauty Tips from Moose Jaw: Travels in Search of Canada Details

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From Reader Review Beauty Tips from Moose Jaw: Travels in Search of Canada for online ebook

Caroline Woodward says

One of the most well-written, funniest, and most enjoyable travel books I've ever read! Warning: if you read in bed and your partner falls asleep before you do, excessive giggling due to escaped or stifled belly laughs may wake him/her up. You may also have, as I did, the sudden urge to see the polar bears of Churchill, Manitoba or the ancient Norse settlement of L'Anse Aux Meadows. Or to return to the spa in Moose Jaw. The author's narrative voice is a unique blend of folklorist and historian, gonzo travel guide, proud family man, perennial little brother and Canuck party animal. A survivor of Katimavik and Canada World Youth's Ecuador program as well as a resourceful independent traveller (he met his future wife in Japan), Ferguson is a hardworking and very successful writer of hilarious travel books, especially *How To Be Canadian* with his older brother, Ian, and the exceptional, critically-acclaimed novel, 419.

Debra Komar says

Comparisons with Bill Bryson are inevitable, although I think Ferguson is kinder and gentler - more Canadian, perhaps. An interesting, somewhat choppy overview of the country, with ample attention paid to the north and a lot about the Hudson's Bay Company. The travelogue portions are more entertaining than the history lessons, although Ferguson handles both well. The writing is competent - you can tell instantly he writes for newspapers and magazines, everything is polished, simple and inoffensive - and there are even the occasional flashes of wit. Humor is very subjective, and I don't find him funny, but that is simply a matter of taste.

Kate says

January book club selection ... Another gooder from Will Ferguson. I love his descriptive and evocative writing style - Ferguson creates such vivid mental images for me. ("The pavement keeps bucking beneath my feet, trying to throw me off ... " "History is not contained in museums; it lies in layers all around us." "{Driving through prairie towns} as though carried on a conveyor belt.")

This book truly is a "travel guide," but unlike any other travel guide you will read ... with his irreverent (and very Canadian) sense of humour, Ferguson describes select bits of Canada as you would not see it otherwise. Previous reviews have disparaged Ferguson for being a narcissist ... I dunno ... I enjoyed getting in his head with the descriptions of his deadbeat dad and his hangovers. If I wanted cold facts, I'd go buy a Lonely Planet. I also appreciated how he connects the things he's describing to Canadian history, and makes it interesting ... history class should be taught with books such as this. His research is detailed and exhaustive.

Even though I liked the book, it took me a while to get into it and get through it. But, that seems to be true of most books these days for some reason.

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

Will Ferguson visits spots across Canada, many of which are lesser known, to explore culture and history. My favorite was the chapter/essay near the end with the renditions of the Viking settlement reenactors with Newfoundland accents. It was also interesting to revisit the Hudson Bay Company and its competitors within Canada (any Oregonian child learns a lot about HBC in 4th grade.) The polar bear chapter probably does the best job at putting the reader there (many crossover places with Annie Muktuk in that one.)

Some essays were fascinating, some had moments of humor; others I felt struggled to find their "why." I liked how the essays started with BC and moves eastward.

Chris says

This is one of my favourite books I've read in recent years.

Part travel memoire, part-history tome. Will Ferguson takes you from west to east through Canada by visiting the places that, though off the beaten path, somehow capture Canadian life and identity with accuracy, wit, and a heaping load of nostalgia.

In his chapter on St. John's Newfoundland in reflecting on the town he says, "Is it possible to be homesick for a place you haven't even left yet?" Well, in reading that line with about 20 pages left in the book I realized how much I did not want to finish it!

I highly recommend this for anybody willing to fall in love with places like Victoria, Moose Jaw, Churchill, Saguenay, and George Street. This is Canadiana at its finest!

Ann-Marie says

Each chapter is its own self contained story about a certain area in Canada, therefore, I picked this book up and down over the last few months without ever losing track. I loved reading it in during #Canada150 year as it highlighted parts of Canada I didn't know much about (ie: Churchill, Manitoba; St John's Nfld, Thunder Bay, Ont) and now I'm keenly motivated to visit these parts of the country. Reminded me how rich our history is and how even the tiniest blips on the map are saturated with stories /people/ landmarks that are unique & resonate. The author's humourous take us delightful too. 3.5-4 stars.

Mme LionHead says

This book was a complete waste of my time. It actually feels like a waste of my time as well to write a short review for the book.

This is a travel memoir, but the content overlaps with Ferguson's other book(s). I had just read Ferguson's Why I Hate Canadians last week. It seemed to me Ferguson did not have much to say in the first place but had to stuff words in between pages to get paid. This was the general impression I got from attempting to

finish the book. I suffered along Ferguson from Victoria, British Columbia through Fort Vermilion, Alberta, Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan to Churchill, Manitoba and died. I fast paced myself across the rest of Canada from Ontario to Newfoundland.

In *Why I Hate Canadian*, Ferguson was witty and sarcastic. In *Beauty Tips*, Ferguson was whiny. He whined across Canada from the west coast to the east. Admittedly there were some interesting and useless historic facts about Canada, but were they worth the time sifting through the entire book for? No.

I would not recommend this book to anyone. This is a book bought off the sales rack at a bookstore labelled "Best Value: \$10. Canadian author" as a gift for some relative you hate but still must give a Christmas present to.

I give it minus stars if I can. One star on Goodreads.

thereadytraveller says

Beauty Tips from Moose Jaw: Excursions in the Great Weird North is a funny and extremely well written book detailing Ferguson's travels "in search of Canada" among the outposts and enclaves of the Great White North during the early 2000's. Whilst the trips take place in a non-contiguous fashion over a period of three-and-a-half years, the quality of writing ensures that each of his excursions melds seamlessly with the next, as he travels from the southern end of Vancouver Island in the west to the northern tip of Newfoundland in the east.

Dipping into each chapter within the book provides access to wonderful insights into the history and people of each region he visits and collectively the book provides a patchwork explanation of what it is that makes the 10 provinces and 3 territories into the federal state of Canada.

Serving up equal parts geography and history lessons, *Beauty Tips from Moose Jaw* is delivered against the personal backdrop of the author's own life while growing up in Canada. This memoir-like approach to parts of the book adds an additional positive dimension to the book.

While sometimes referred to as Canada's Bill Bryson, Ferguson has his own unique voice and storytelling style that is extremely sharp, wry and engaging. Given the wonderfully scenic images invoked of the prairies, tundra and riverways through which Ferguson travels, one is almost forgiven for assuming that Ferguson is on the payroll of the Canadian Tourism Board. From the majesty of ye olde town of Victoria on Vancouver Island to the Polar Bear strewn tundras outside of Churchill, this is travel writing near its very best.

Beauty Tips from Moose Jaw is a must read book for anyone interested in the early (European) history of Canada and who prefer it served up in an offbeat, fun and lively fashion. It is especially recommended for those with a love for Canada and who are interested in discovering some places off the usual snow trodden path.

Adrienne says

In order to remedy the terrible deficiency in my knowledge about our Neighbor to the North, I checked out *Beauty Tips from Moose Jaw*, a wonderfully named travel book, written by a Canadian, all about travelling from the western edge of the country, to the eastern edge, to the Great White North part, and many stops in between.

After reading the book, I learned a lot more about Canada that I didn't know before. For example:

- Victoria is “more English than England” and full of neat things to see.
- During Canada's storied past, control of the inland regions was fought over by two fur trading companies: The Hudson Bay Company and the Northwestern Company.
- St John, in Newfoundland, doesn't have any intersections with right angles in its downtown area. Also, Newfoundland is what Ireland would like to be.
- Canada has lots of “Large Objects By the Side of the Road” - like concrete dinosaurs, or gigantic eggs, you know, “Home of the World's Largest _____”
- Despite having many “Large Objects By the Side of the Road,” the best way to see Canada is not by car, but by canoe. Awesome.
- The guy who started Tim Horton's (yes, that would be Tim Horton) is up for sainthood in Canada, and the doughnut holes that Timmy Ho's sells are called Tim-bits. Also Awesome.
- Canadians really drink lots of beer.

So there you have it. Canada in a nutshell. If you want to know more about Our Neighbor to the North, you ought to check out *Beauty Tips from Moose Jaw* ; I feel like I know a lot more about the Great White North (and the east and west bits, too). I also feel like I really want to visit Canada. They have Large Objects By the Side of the Road, and, um...French people. Perfect for a memorable vacation!

Becca Arend says

Light, witty, beautiful, and significant, all wrapped in one man's travel journal across Canada. As an American, the stories were easy to follow (despite my almost complete ignorance of all things Canadian) and very informative (which gently remedied that ignorance). This book was intellectually fascinating and still so enjoyable! I'm armed with a lifelong supply of Canadian fun facts and a much deeper appreciation for the country of outposts to my north.

Liz says

This is a book written for Canadians, by a Canadian. Anyone reading from outside, have to realize that this book is written with a Western Canadian mentality (which I can identify with, and maybe that's why I feel

like i "get" it).

The feeling of this book to me is one of a guy who is trying to explain what Canada is and looks to areas most often overlooked by everyone (Even its inhabitants). Takes you away from the most obvious (Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, etc), to the buried gems across the country. It made me feel by the end of the book, that if I were to take a drive through Canada, I would want to include some of those places on my list. I mean, who wouldn't want to check out a ship stranded on the prairies, or take a tour bus to see some polar bears. Even if I never do get to travel Canada the way he did, at least I feel a bit more enriched by the stuff I learned about my country in this book.

Terra says

Liked but did not adore. I learned heaps of interesting things about Canada from someone who appears to hold it in very deep affection, which is always nice, but Ferguson is a wee bit too self-consciously Mr. Quirky Funny Travel Writer With An Edge for my taste. He didn't have the abandoned, delighted sense of YAY about his subject that makes (in my mind) for a truly fabulous non-fiction writer - it was all a little too patently writer-y. And now I'm just saying words. Words words words. ANYWAY. You people know what I mean, right?

In sum: Good enough for me to read it through with some sense of enjoyment, but not so much that I will be seeking out more Ferguson work.

Marigold says

When I travel I like to buy a book in my destination city/country, related to the destination city/country if possible. Even if I can't find anything I will buy something in the airport! So my husband & I went to Victoria for our anniversary & I picked up this book, used, at Russell's Books. I think Ferguson is funny & I enjoyed reading the book; I feel I learned quite a bit about Canada, especially some of the under-the-radar places. I learned that the Parliament Building in Victoria was built on a swamp, for one thing! And I learned that I didn't know quite as much about the Underground Railroad as I thought I did - argh, I hate it when I don't know important information about my own country's history!

Funny bits, among others:

- Ferguson's home town was listed in a book called Ghost Towns of Alberta. This was news to all the people who lived there at the time.
- I don't know if a group of ducks is really called "a disappointment of ducks," but it should be!
- "What is a porcupine, after all, if not simply a beaver with better weaponry?"

Yes - along with being just fun & enjoyable, this book did make me want to visit more of Canada! Maybe not the really, really cold part with the polar bears. And I got to finish reading it over the 4th of July holiday, which gave me a sort of perverse pleasure in itself!

Kkraemer says

Honestly, I chose this book because of its title, a sort of Fredericks of North Dakota sort of appeal.

I've been to Moose Jaw, and have always loved the name. I also have traveled extensively in Canada, and was intrigued to read about the country that everyone seems to forget.

Will Ferguson wrote the chapters in this book over a number of years, randomly traveling hither and yon. He is a writer who captures the look, feel, history, and humor of the places he goes and, in this book, he organizes his tour from west (Victoria) to east. He hops from place to place in a somewhat random fashion (maybe chosen because of journalists' tours and family vacations?) to give the reader a sense of the intersection between people and geography. Canada is so vast: he writes of a town where no one can walk around alone because there are polar bears lurking everywhere (churchill) and of towns where the smallest break in the prairie is a town with a name on it.

Now, I want to go back to Moose Jaw, and I want to go on to eastern Canada, where I've never been before. This was a nice way to take a virtual trip: Ferguson is funny and insightful, and the pictures he's planted in my mind's eye make me wonder why I'm sitting here writing this rather than googling cheap flights to Ontario.

Heep says

This is a choice piece of Canadiana - upbeat without being too glib, patriotic but remaining clear-eyed and representative while finding unique stories. Ferguson is a very good writer who spent most of his early career on relative fluff like this book recounting road trips throughout Canada. The lightness of the subject matter belies the author's craft and skill as a storyteller. In a few sentences, seemingly effortlessly written, he is able to get to the essence of an idea or capture a mood. It makes this a very easy read, and an entertaining one. On occasion, Ferguson waxes poetic but not too much. The economy of fervour makes it all the more appropriate and effective. Canada is certainly worth some applause and gratitude. As my family prepares for our great Canadian rail and road trip to celebrate the 150th, it is good to be reminded:

"We have inherited an easy life in Canada. A life of calm. It is freedom of a lazy sort, a freedom so pervasive we barely notice it, and one that we claim by virtue of our citizenship. But it is worth remembering that people - in the words of Bulgarian-born Canadian philanthropist Ignat Kaneff - "crawl across minefields to get here"."
