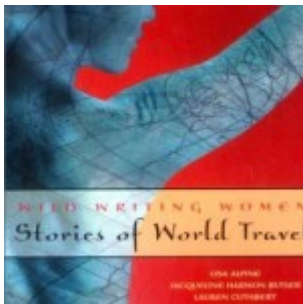


Words bring a world of adventure to life

By Kathryn Reed

Interesting travel pieces capture my imagination, taking me places I'll never go, returning me to places I've been and introducing me to places I've never heard of.



“Wild Writing Women: Stories of World Travel” is a collection of short stories from a group of women who gathered to draw inspiration from one another to pursue their writing and their travels. The book published in 2001 is still relevant. It’s not like traveling and exploring ever become dated.

As with most collections like this, some of the stories resonate more than others. And in this type of writing, it’s so personal. It isn’t a travel guide to get someone to book a reservation. It’s a snapshot of an experience they had. But it’s also gives readers a taste of different cultures.

As a woman who has traveled a bit by myself and with others, I felt myself identifying with the circumstances of some of the writers even if the locales were different.

A passage from Pamela Michael who is traveling by herself in India reads, “In an instant I made the sort of decision that every traveler has to make from time to time: You decide to take a risk, trust a stranger, enter a cave, explore a trail, act on intuition and experience something new. It is this giving oneself over to a strange culture or environment that often reaps the most reward, that makes travel so worthwhile and exhilarating.”

I agree. Perhaps that’s why I am not a big fan of big

organized tours. I don't want the sterilized – or dumb-downed American – version of visiting someplace.

As Christi Phillips points out in her essay about New Orleans, specialized expeditions are a great way to find out interesting tidbits about an area, its culture, the people and meaning behind traditions.

“The tombs aren't completely airtight. When bodies decompose, they release a lot of gas, and if the tomb were airtight, they would explode. For the most part, modern embalming techniques have taken care of this problem, but on a hot day, you can still smell something a bit odd in here. Hence the tradition of brining flowers to a gravesite,” Phillips writes, using what her guide tells her on the cemetery tour.

“Wild Writing Women” takes readers on a tour of the world. Some experiences might be worth emulating; others definitely should be avoided – like being a victim in a horrendous bus crash and nearly dying. But all have something to capture the adventurous traveler.