

[By Victor Pryles](#)

You can get reliable, useful information from guidebooks. Yet, some are better than others and often, it's important to know what you're looking for when you travel, what your goals are and what your pocketbook can handle.

As I often tell my fellow Traveling Paupers, a guidebook is just that— a guide. Not a set of rules that are fixed in stone. Never let any guidebook chain you down to a fixed itinerary. Be adventurous, add your own mix of wonder and discovery to the trip you plan, and use your guidebook as an introduction to the locale, not the final arbiter of what is valuable.

That being said, I'd like to explore some of the guidebooks I've found useful in making trips around the world. It is, by no means, a comprehensive listing of all the books available to you. But this sampling should give you a very good starting point to discover what travel books can offer.

### **The Michelin Red Guides**

Provide detailed information about European hotels and restaurants, while the Green Guides focus on European art, history, and places of interest. They tend to be best suited to travel that isn't too budget conscious. Upscale.

### **The Fielding Guides**

Provides a candid, well written guide especially good at finding off-beat, unusual destinations. I recommend them to Paupers that wish to travel off the beaten track. Unique.

### **Fodor's Travel Guides**

Recently celebrating their 60th birthday with almost 100 titles in the Gold Line series. They emphasize the West, but the Fodor's Guides cover countries though- out the world. They provide good historical and cultural information as well as practical recommendations. I like it for those who wish to stay on the middle of the road. Perennial Bestseller.

### **The Frommer Series**

The old \$5. A Day series has become the \$40 a Day series. They offer touring guides, city guides, and special editions. While emphasizing Europe and the United States they take pains to describe restaurants, hotels and nightlife as well. Budget.

### **The Lonely Planet Series**

Called, simply enough, the LP, they have earned a great reputation for worldwide budget and independent travel. There are five series offered, but my favorite is the On A Shoestring guide, covering everything from a specific country, to a region or continent for the low budget traveler. Eclectic.

### **The Travel Handbook Series**

This series contains more than 50 books from Moon Publications and are updated annually. That's their greatest value in my judgment. Contemporary.

### **Europe Through The Back Door**

Authored by Rick Steves. You get an itinerary and "must see" list of sights for limited European trips. A no brainer.

### **The Rough Guides**

Focuses on college-age travelers in Europe. Much the same flavor as you will find in the LP series; irreverent and directed to the budget conscious. Street smart.

A good guidebook makes travel vastly easier. Use them even when you're only traveling in your arm chair. The best spark your imagination and lead you to unknown discoveries and adventure.

Victor K. Pryles©2005 - <http://www.paupertravel.com>

Victor K. Pryles is the author of: "Travel Cheap- Travel Well!"- Confessions Of A Traveling Pauper. His website offers a free e-course: "The Top 100 Travel Planning Websites" and a

complete forum, articles and more. <http://www.paupertravel.com>

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