



# Worth the Detour: A History of the Guidebook

*By Nicholas T. Parsons*

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## Worth the Detour: A History of the Guidebook By Nicholas T. Parsons

Where would we be without guidebooks? All over the world travellers check out the sights of their chosen destination with their noses glued to a guidebook, and rely on them for every aspect of their visit - ordering meals, understanding the locals or avoiding wandering into the red-light district. Few realise the guidebook has a long and distinguished history, going back to Biblical times and encompassing major cultural and social changes that have witnessed the transformation of travel. Much as the modern "Blue Guide" will tell the visitor what the essential sights of Paris or New York are so, in the fourth century AD, a "Guidebook to the Seven Wonders of the World" was produced. In 1480, an 'official' guidebook to the Holy Land warned 'For the sake of good relations with foreign hosts, a grave and courteous manner must be maintained ...'. This is very similar to the advice given in one of the most recent guidebooks to Iraq: 'Be especially courteous when dealing with officials ...if you upset them, they can be your worst enemies'. In this delightful book Nicholas Parsons takes us on a fascinating journey through centuries of travel writing.

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#### **About the Author**

Nicholas Parsons is a freelance writer who specialises in the history and culture of central Europe. He has written the Blue Guide to Austria, The Xenophobe's Guide to the Austrians and city guides to Budapest and Prague. He lives in Austria.

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