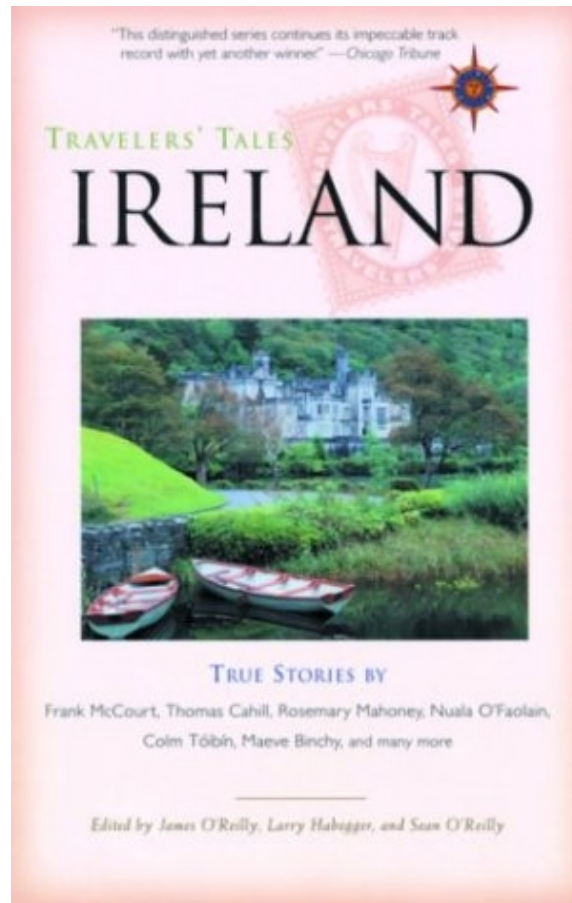


A Book Review on Travelers' Tales Ireland and Reflections on Global Tourism and Travel Strategies

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Travelers' Tales Ireland

True Stories by Frank McCourt, Thomas Cahill, Rosemary Mahoney, Nuala O'Faolain, Colm Tóibín, Maeve Binchy, and many more

Edited by James O'Reilly, Sean O'Reilly, Larry Habegger, and Brian Alexander

Introduction

Before this course and before reading Travelers' Tales Ireland, if one were to ask me what I think and know about Ireland, its people, and its culture, I would say that Ireland is a very green, hilly land full of people who get drunk and fight a lot. That's probably a pretty common, naïve, American misconception. But somewhere behind my fallacies, I have always had a keen interest in their history, their music, and their heritage.

Their music is very unique to their culture and it sparks a desire to experience an authentic adventure in the life of an Irishman. From my readings and learning of the culture of Ireland, my travels would first lead me to their larger cities—like Dublin and Cork—to experience the public, the music, and the night life. I would then venture to a small shepherd's town like Mayo and experience the pastures, the family's, and the folklore. Finally, I would take it all in as I hike and bike the trails of County Kerry and its Kerry Mountains and kayak the western shores.

Rural Ireland is a shepherd's pasture, a hiker's journey, a cyclist's ambition, a nomad's homeland, a kayaker's thrill; equally, urban Ireland is a brother's loyalty, a sister's melody, a dadaí's hymn, a mamaí's lullaby, a granny's recipe, a daideó's fable. Ireland can't be truly experienced without living there for a long while. The relationships are key to the Irish way of life. Without the relationships and cultural roots, it's just not Ireland.

Part I: Book Summary & Review of Travelers' Tales Ireland

Book Summary:

Travelers' Tales Ireland is a journey through 43 unique experiences in the “enchanted land” (H.V. Morton, p. 351) of Ireland followed by a travel–preparation guide written by the editors. The first four parts (sections) of the book are stories and tales of Travel and life in Ireland. The experiences span from hiking trails along historic walls, kayaking the Galway shores, hiking the Kerry Mountains,

raising a Mayo shepherd dog, walking the Cliffs of Moher, grazing Mayo pastures, befriending strangers while golfing Portmarnock, being a writer in Dublin, and many more. Some of these tales come from visitors of Ireland; however, most come Irish natives who often leave and venture back to their homeland. The natives' stories really immerse you into a deep-rooted Irish experience by getting the reader into the mind of the story teller. The reader is offered the sense of what it might have been like to grow up in Ireland. From the visitors' stories, the reader will understand that every experience in Ireland will be different.

The final part—Part Five (p. 353)—gets you ready as a tourist to Ireland. Once the reader has finished parts one through four and begins the final part, they understand a lot more about why things are the way they are and why they ought to prepare in the fashion the book suggests. The layout was well thought out. First you get to know the heritage and tradition which prepares you to plan your travels to the land, then the final part is the tourists guide. It prepares a tourist as a tourist should prepare: noting the currency, how to get there, how to get around, the kind of people you'll encounter, the places you should stay, et al.

Book Review:

“Religion was as pervasive as the currency. It was everywhere. It was embedded deep in the Irish mind, and that seemed most evident in the way Irish people blessed themselves as they passed by a church; an instinctual flutter of the right hand as they studied the headlines of the newspaper they had just bought, or scolded a disobedient child, or made a conversational point to a companion.

- Rosemary Mahoney, Traveler's Tales Ireland, pg. 52

It is evident in the readings of Travelers' Tales Ireland that religion is a very momentous influence on the country. As Rosemary Mahoney stated in the preceding quote, “[Religion] was embedded deep in the Irish mind...” It's practically part of their DNA. Even those that didn't find

themselves at church for years or decades when away from their homeland, when in Ireland, it always found its way back into their lives out of respect for their family, friends, or even mere strangers along the city walks.

“...I hadn't said the rosary for over twenty years, and wasn't sure I even remembered how the "Hail Mary" went, but I agreed...We began to pray. Frank helped me recall the words; the memories I'd never lost.

- Tim O'Reilly, Traveler's Tales Ireland, pg. 114

Although religion was hardly a part of Tim O'Reilly's life outside of Ireland, when he came home to Ireland to be with his dying father, he prayed with his family and it struck near and dear childhood memories.

Travelers' Tales Ireland is not just about religion, however. Religion is merely a root to the context of the narratives. Probably in part to religion: family, relationships, and tradition are the principal influential factors in the Irish culture. There are forty-three accounts told in the first 348 pages of the book and not one of them strays away from those important keys. To be Irish is to be involved with your family, your community, and your heritage. The land touches you like no other land. H.V. Morton was veracious in his account as he prepared to leave Ireland:

“When my feet first trod Irish soil I felt that I had come to a magic country and now, as I said good-bye, I knew it truly as an enchanted island. That minor note which is like a vibration in the air, something that lives in the light and in the water and in the soil, runs through every Irish thing, but, like the cry of a bat, it is too high to be heard. But a man is conscious of it everywhere.”

- H.V. Morton, Traveler's Tales Ireland, p. 351

The book is very well rounded giving the reader the feeling of being in Ireland before they get there and how to prepare themselves for the enchanting experience that awaits them. It's also a great book for someone who's already visited Ireland to re-experience the great character of the Ireland they might remember.

Part II: Travel Philosophy

Before this course, I took a basic Humanities class at Salt Lake Community College that truly opened my eyes. I read of historical events to which I was oblivious and learned to view things and take things in from more than one—often biased—viewpoint. This class has also had a similar impact on me in the way I look at traveling. I have never traveled outside of the continental U.S., and it is very unfortunate for me as a global citizen. I haven't had much opportunity to delve myself into other cultures and get a life-changing experience. I've had friends in America from other countries and cultures. I was fortunate enough to experience some of their family traditions with them. Relationships with people of other cultures is very enriching for ones wisdom as a Global Citizen.

I have a desire to experience other cultures in their truest form. There's nothing richer for one's soul than to know, understand, and care for their fellow citizens of this fragile rock we all share as a home. There is a quote I will remember that is very well rounded and it stems from the golden rule:

“Man can no longer live for himself alone. We must realize that all life is valuable and that we are united to all life. From this knowledge comes our spiritual relationship to the universe.”

– Albert Schweitzer (From Week 2: Global Citizen – Know Thyself)

With this quote in mind, I can always remember to put others before myself, which is an easily-forgotten act when away from the comfort of home.

My philosophy—which will continue to grow and mend to my future learnings—is to be a traveler who can visit a destination well prepared—with an open mind—to learn about the people, their history, their traditions, their culture, and their land, to have something positive and meaningful to offer in return, and to leave with a new perspective.

To fulfill my philosophy, I set out to be a cultural tourist and an Eco-tourist. From our lectures, a cultural tourist is:

“Concerned with a country or region's culture, especially its arts. Cultural tourism includes tourism in urban areas, particularly historic or large cities and their cultural facilities such as museums and theatres. It can also, less often, include tourism to rural areas; for outdoor festivals, the houses of famous writers and artists, sculpture parks and landscapes made famous in literature.”

– Linda S. Ralston, Ph.D, Week 6: The Respectful Traveler

And an Eco-tourist is defined as:

“Purposeful Travel to natural areas to understand the culture and natural history of the environment, taking care not to alter the integrity of the ecosystem, while producing economic opportunities that make the conservation of natural resources beneficial to local people.”

– Linda S. Ralston, Ph.D, Week 3: The Responsible Global Traveler

When I travel, I now know the importance of preparation. It's very important to know a bit of information about your destination not only before you arrive, but before you pack (or even buy your ticket for that matter); this will prevent a dreaded occurrence of culture shock, or getting held up at the airport due to something you packed that is not allowed through customs.

I know how to be more respectful of the people and their societal values by avoiding any contribution to foul trade practices while keeping myself safe from thieves and scams. Tourists are targeted for scams and theft because of their gullibility and the amount of money they may carry with them. They are also targeted by organizations that provide goods through malpractices such as child labor or conventions which are damaging to resources. Before involving myself in any activities or buying anything, I will ask myself, “to whom am I really contributing here? Is there any risk of harming the people, the society, the environment, or myself?”

By being a cultural and eco tourist and remembering the golden rule: I will know how to respect other people and their cultures, I will be able to provide something positive and meaningful to those who I visit, and I will grow wiser and more open-minded as a global citizen.

Part III: Lessons which Formed My Philosophy and Travel Strategies

There are already several quotes from Travelers' Tales Ireland and the lectures from this course throughout the preceding sections of this paper that have influenced my philosophy and travel strategies. However, there are several lectures and lessons that I found very helpful in opening my eyes and narrowing my ideals for a more concrete philosophy.

The layout of the course was well structured. It was very helpful to first find out what we, ourselves, believe and how we think early in the semester as we did in the “Global Citizen – Know Thyself” module. Fortunately, I found myself to be quite open-minded and fairly knowledgeable of the world around me. But it still opened my eyes to how much I don't know about non-European countries, particularly third-world countries. The slide on celebrating diversity from the lecture in this module has a good message:

“Celebrating diversity isn't about melting the world into one multi-cultural population. When we value diversity, we seek to integrate, not assimilate our differences. Celebrating diversity means allowing and respecting our differences until the differences don't make a difference anymore!”

– Linda S. Ralston (From Week 2: Global Citizen – Know Thyself)

The key words in this statement are “integrate, not assimilate.” That alone is so powerful in its meaning. The idea is to not make the world all the same, but to understand and respect one another so we can simply coexist and provide for one another.

The lecture “The Climate Change Challenge: A Call To Arms” had a lot of powerful messages and I am passionate about spreading an understanding of the misnamed phenomenon Global Warming.

The name is too kind and untelling of the truth and most people not only don't believe in it, but they don't understand that it's a problem today, not just a problem for our descendants to worry about. Yes, our children will suffer, but the problem is current and we must act now to save our fragile home. I am happy this discussion is finding its way into classrooms around the world. I was further motivated by the particular lecture discussed in class.

The lecture “Packing for Global Citizenship” was very helpful. Having never traveled outside the United States, I never knew the importance of quality planning and preparation. There are many things I would have never thought of like not using ice in your drinks in case of infected water (seems simple enough, but I'm sure it would have slipped my mind), the importance of medications and first aid, separating credit cards and other money, talking to a doctor before you go, talking to your bank for fraud protection before you go, and considering traveler's insurance.

Finally, the lectures educated me on how to prepare and plan my travels and Traveler's Tales Ireland provided as a great reference for understanding exactly what needs to be sought out in preparation. The last section of the book did a great job of telling the reader what to expect when they arrive, what to do with their money (use Euros), how to safely manage their money, where to stay, the easiest means of transportation, etc.

My philosophy will likely be forever changing as I grow as a global citizen. From this course, its lectures, discussions and readings, I have been able to fulfill its high-minded learning outcomes. From the earlier sections of the course—particularly, “The Global Citizen: Know Thyself”—, I was able to identify individual values, life purpose, and eliminate personal barriers. From a combination of all the lectures, I have become conscientious of tourism issues like abuse of fair trade regulations, emissions and global warming, and sex tourism from a global community perspective.

Works Cited

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