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FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ TRAVEL

Art and Travel Europe: Step into the Lives of Five Famous Painters

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The writer Henry Miller said, “One’s destination is never a place, but rather a new way of looking at things.” By seeking out new experiences, new perspectives and new places, the traveler discovers a new self. The latest from Museyon Guides, Art + Travel Europe: Step into the Lives of Five Famous Painters is a handy guide for the person hoping to broaden his horizons. Thoughtful essays, excellent graphics (over 150 illustrations and photographs), and easy-to-use information make this book a must-have for the traveling art lover.

Five well-known European painters and their cities—Caravaggio (Rome), Goya (Madrid), Munch (Oslo), Van Gogh (Arles), and Vermeer (Delft)—are the stars of the show. Each artist is featured in a practical way, with a brief biographical essay, a description of his region, and recommendations for exploring both the past and the present. The reader is introduced to the painter in a new way: as a person rather than as a legend. For example, Van Gogh painted “those ubiquitous sunflowers” to decorate his guest room during a visit from Gauguin. And Caravaggio, a knight famous for his violent temper, “never sketched his ideas, instead he went straight to the canvas to capture the scenes he had set in front of him.” Taking the position that the artwork speaks for itself, Art + Travel Europe takes a day-to-day approach to travel. There are lists of the masterpieces, and suggestions for guided tours. But beside these recommendations are ways to see the inner lives of the painters: Vermeer’s childhood home, the streets Goya walked, the promenade that inspired Munch to paint The Scream.

For such a small book, Art + Travel Europe is packed with information, which, though well-organized, may be overwhelming to the reader who doesn’t already have a few travel plans in mind. It’s easy to get sidetracked by the sidebars, which feature unusual ideas for more learning. Each section, for example, has at least one page dedicated to movie and book lists that were inspired by the artist—though the die-hard fan will be disappointed that few of these are documentaries or historically relevant. There are also lists of local restaurants, other local outings, and traveling resources. Fortunately, there is so much to choose from that nearly any reader would find something intriguing—or, at the very least, a place to start making travel plans.

Much like the masterpieces themselves, the lives of the great painters are transformative. The innovative approach to travel in Art + Travel Europe is fresh and vibrant. The old masters are shown in new light, as people living extraordinary lives. With this guidebook, the traveler who chooses to walk in their footsteps will have a wonderful time going off the beaten path.

CLAIRE RUDY FOSTER (July 13, 2010)

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