

Bridgespotting: A Guide to Bridges that Connect People, Places, and Times

Bob Dover

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Bridgespotting is a niche travel guide that makes a strong case for considering infrastructure in new ways.

Bridge enthusiast Bob Dover's history-minded travel guide *Bridgespotting* covers iconic and undercelebrated bridges across North America and Europe.

Written for people who visit bridges for their scenic vantages, as parts of tours, or to marvel at their engineering, this curious guide places sharp emphasis on experiencing bridges on foot. Its conversational passages cover facts about the bridges' construction, related visitor's centers and gift shops, and tips. Beginning with the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco and continuing to cover London's Tower Bridge and the Ponte Vecchio in Florence, the entries are characterized by offhanded observations and playful trivia.

Often speaking directly to the audience, the chapters detail landmark and historic bridges alike. They share insights about their practical aspects, like their vulnerability to weather, their places within trade routes and at town centers, and their destruction during wars. There are also tidbits for hobbyists, as about the subsets of bridges. Indeed, some of the book's topics will only land with dedicated audiences, as with notes about lenticular truss bridges that were made by a specific company.

Dover's passion for fine details makes this a thorough compendium, if also a dense one. The book both covers how bridges evolved and details the intricacies that mark them as belonging to distinct communities. A bridge's materials, for instance, often reveal the particulars of its locale, while its inscriptions, plaques, and ornamentation reflect the surrounding culture's stories. Indeed, the chapter on cultural bridges delves into bridges in Claude Monet's art, in music, and in literature in an effort to widen this niche topic.

Treating bridges as gathering points as much as they are a means for conveyance, the book drops frequent comments about how much is missed when people limit their experiences of bridges to views from the interiors of cars. It seeks to impart the shared feeling that bridges are more than just utilitarian arches and decks: they are engineering marvels with romantic potential. The book celebrates their fanciful ironwork and sculptural cable designs, and notes the controversial tourist practice of leaving behind love padlocks. A few photographs are included to complement the text, but its ultimate emphasis is on the descriptions of its prose.

Moving from iconic to local bridges, *Bridgespotting* is an in-depth travel guide for those engaged in the unusual pastime of visiting and pondering bridges.

KAREN RIGBY (July 20, 2022)

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