

Never Leaving Laramie: Travels in a Restless World

John W. Haines

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John W. Haines's travel accounts go across the world, but their heart stays at home.

Haines is from Laramie, Wyoming, a place he describes in terms of its freedom, extreme weather, and adventurous and caring people. But like many young residents, he was intent—destined, even—to leave. His essays follow him to Japan, Tibet, and East Berlin; they include a series of stories from West Africa. Serendipitous encounters, cultural faux pas, travel hang-ups, and bursts of adrenaline feature in, though Haines's stories are united most by themes of transitions, both internal and when it comes to switching locales. An accident after jumping from a train left him dependent on a wheelchair, threatening to end his travels, but the book's final essay recounts his first international trip in a wheelchair, five years after his accident.

Haines knows that no one can escape their hometown. His years of wanderlust don't drown out his love for Laramie's history, natural beauty, and people, who are often his travel companions. He approaches the world with the adventurous spirit, intelligence, and independence he learned there, making Laramie seem as alluring a destination as the others he describes. Brimming with youthful energy and a bit of bravado, each account is shared alongside the wisdom that comes years after an experience. As a narrator, Haines is open-minded, full of love and a little jealousy for his younger self. His tales contain humor, humility, and keen observations of culture and nature.

A compelling invitation to accept both the gifts and the challenges that come with change, *Never Leaving Laramie* is a nimble travel text concerned with making oneself at home all over the globe.

MELISSA WUSKE (September / October 2020)

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