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CLARION REVIEW ★★★☆☆ TRAVEL

Travel Junkie

Jack Harms
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As the title of Jack Harms's book proclaims, he is a "travel junkie." Harms loves to travel, and he has been fortunate enough to go just about everywhere his interests take him.

One part travel diary and one part travel guide, *Travel Junkie* serves to both document the author's many experiences and offer insider tips to travelers who follow his path. Harms begins with a bit of autobiographical information, followed by chapters that, for the most part, describe the places he has visited. Written in a folksy manner, each chapter is a short reminiscence about a particular trip and locale, along with "summary comments," which include the author's recommendations for things to do. His recommendations for England and Scotland, for example, while not exactly original, include such advice as "stroll through the London parks," "have fish and chips at an English pub," and "be sure to carry an umbrella."

Harms is a natural storyteller, so the reader is likely to become acquainted with an area in a way that suplements a traditional travel guide. In France, writes Harms, "The only way I found my way out of Paris was by navigating by the sun." Tangier, Morocco, according to Harms, "reminded me of one of the worst Mexican border towns, lots of squalor, poverty, beggars, and dangers." Austria is "a small country, but what it lacks in quantity, it makes up for it with quality." Kyoto, Japan, represents "the true spirit and personality of the old-time Japan."

Harms includes an occasional chapter that is not about a specific location. In "Travel Tips," for example, he discusses the positives and negatives of tours, offers some useful hints about packing, addresses security in various countries, and talks briefly about food and water, health concerns, money issues, and frequent-flyer miles. While this chapter is hardly comprehensive, it does touch on a number of key issues facing anyone who travels. In "The Best and Worst," he offers his opinion on man-made structures, countries and cities, natural wonders, and levels of friendliness and safety. Scattered throughout this well-designed book are some high-quality full-color photographs of Harms and fellow travelers taken at sites around the world.

At times, Harms's writing is a bit uneven and rambling, but his style is engaging. While he only describes the highlights of his many trips, Harms does have the ability to paint an intimate picture of a locale, bringing it to life for the reader. Anyone who wants to engage in armchair travel, get a little taste of many destinations, and learn some helpful travel tips along the way will find a lot to like about *Travel Junkie*.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (January 3, 2013)

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