



## Travels with JJ

### Lori Stewart

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*Travels with JJ is a lighthearted and entertaining travelogue that moves across the United States, two canines in tow.*

Lori Stewart's captivating travelogue *Travels with JJ* follows the author's cross-country journey with her two rescue dogs, Jenny and Jeff.

The golden lab mixes are five years old when they become Stewart's traveling companions. Their bittersweet backstory is revealed in the book's first two chapters; Stewart recalls bottle-feeding them and their three siblings after they were orphaned.

Stewart decides to drive from California to Maine to visit friends and family and "perhaps ... discover a new way of looking at things." Her book encompasses her impressions of the locales she visits, her thoughts on those places, and memories from before the trip.

Related chronologically, the trip is easy to follow, moving north and then eastward across the Great Plains, then to Washington, DC, New York City, and Maine. A two-page map clarifies the route. Stewart also reminisces about living on the East Coast in her earlier years. These memories segue well into her current trip.

Thoughtful, introspective prose with rich language is interspersed with historical tidbits, such as about the more than fifty ponds she sees dotting the roadside along Interstate 80 in Nebraska; they were originally holes dug as part of the highway's construction. Such information is inserted nonchalantly and smoothly; Stewart's observations are informative and educational.

The text is also marked by Stewart's humor and whimsy. Along the way, she covers a wide variety of topics—some gleaned from audiobooks listened to while driving; most initiated by the places she visits. Engaging and informative passages cover things such as the hops crops of Washington's Yakima Valley, which are revealed to be used medicinally as well as for beer.

Personal information is casually and sympathetically incorporated. The people whom Stewart encounters are emphasized less than what she herself thinks and believes. The dogs are the second-best fleshed out presence; they have definite personalities that come through in their mini adventures along the way.

Nearly seventy color photos are included in this slim book; not many are Stewart's own. Stock photos and photos from friends and family make up the bulk, with the latter being the most personal. They highlight and emphasize the majestic beauty of the mentioned places, including western mountain ranges and New England forests and lakes.

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ROBIN FARRELL EDMUNDS (July 9, 2018)

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